THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MEL GIBSON
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WHY THE URANIUM STORY MATTERS
THE EDITORS, PETER BEINART

THE NEW REPUBLIC
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Must He Be Stopped?

The Case Against Howard Dean
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The Case Against The Case Against Dean
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The Other Candidates Fight Back
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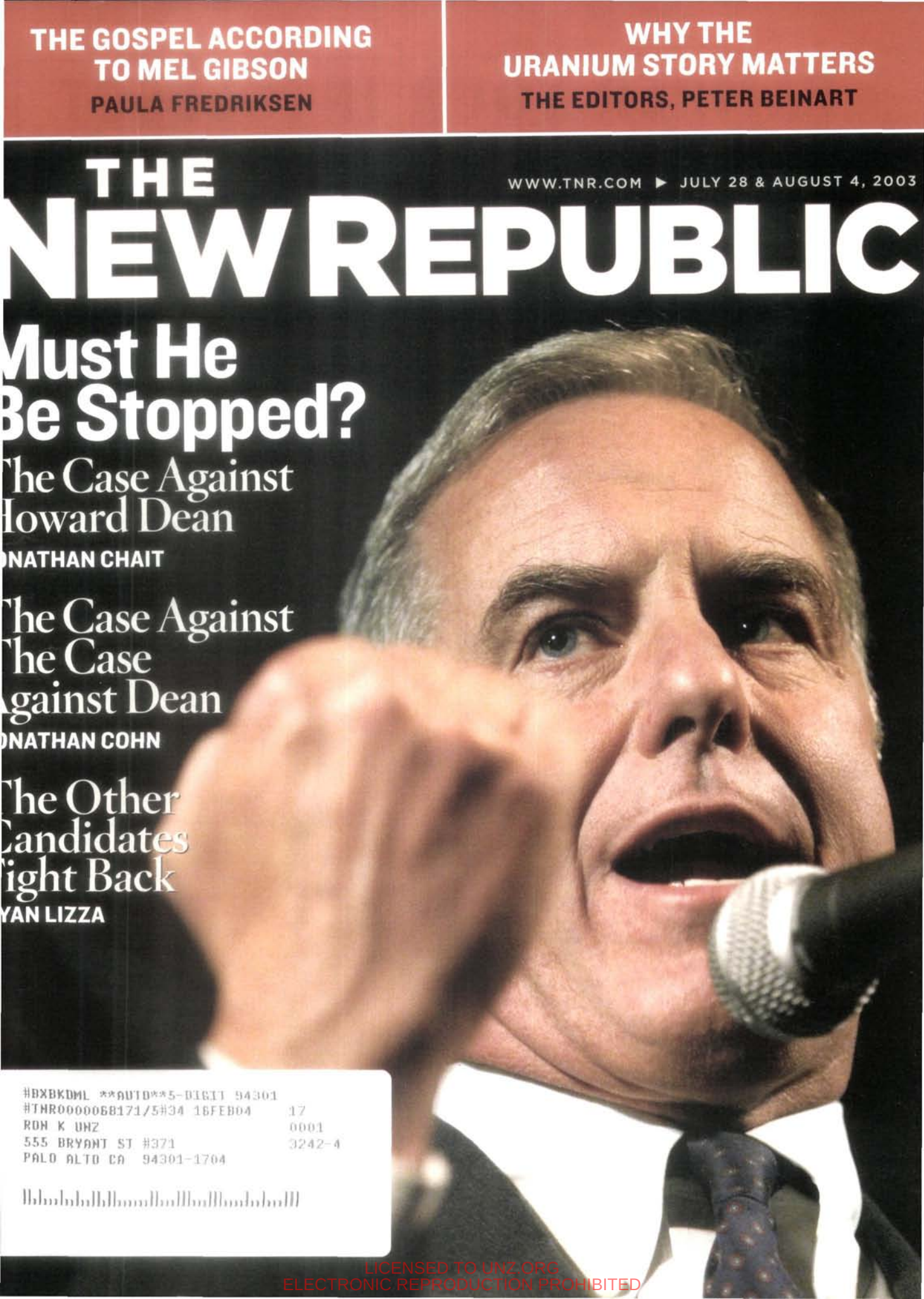

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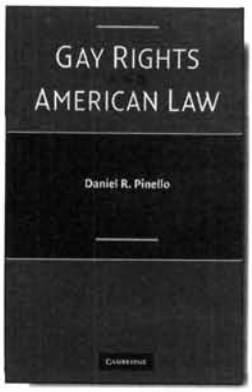

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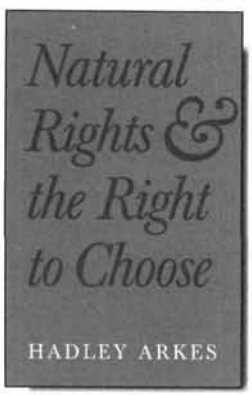

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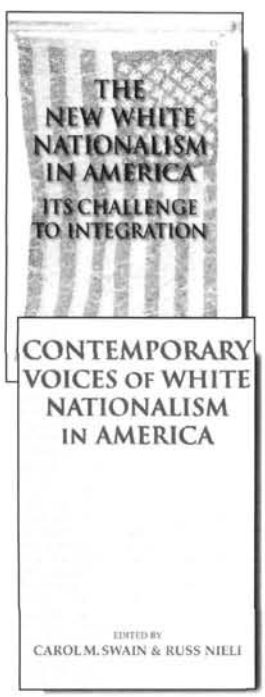
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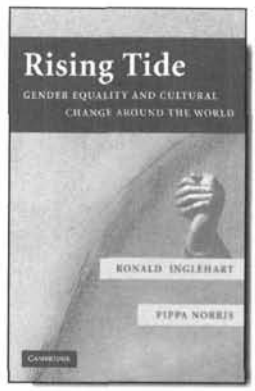

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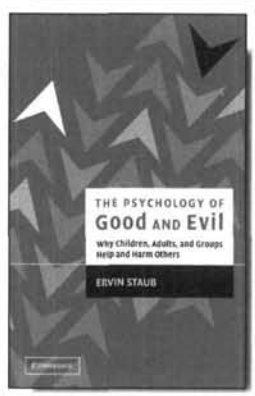

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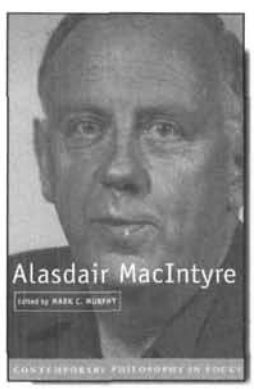

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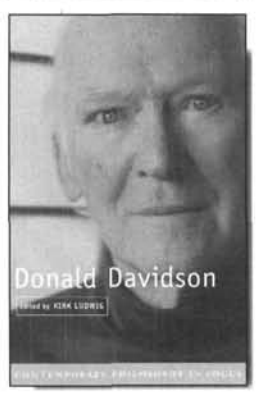

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CORRESPONDENCE

REROUTED

RACHEL VAN DONGEN'S ARTICLE "The Right Man" misstates the story of decreased coca production in Bolivia and Peru and overstates the success Colombian President Alvaro Uribe Vélez has had in his current battle against drug production and illegally armed groups (June 16). A number of policies and other factors combined to decrease coca cultivation in Peru and Bolivia, but, contrary to the assertion in Van Dongen's article, neither country ever used aerial-fumigation spraying programs. Nor does fumigation tell the whole story of the coca drop in Colombia last year; according to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), 44 percent of the decrease in coca-rich Putumayo can be attributed to farmers pulling up their coca by hand in exchange for alternative development aid.

Total coca cultivation in the Andean region has remained around 200,000 hectares for the last 15 years, as counternarcotics policies aimed at the source of drugs have only forced production to new areas and back to previous locations. The impact in the United States is marginal at best. The Justice Department reported in January that the availability of cocaine continued to be "stable." Rather than sponsoring fumigation, the U.S. government would be wise to shift that funding into alternative development projects in Colombia and overburdened treatment programs back home.

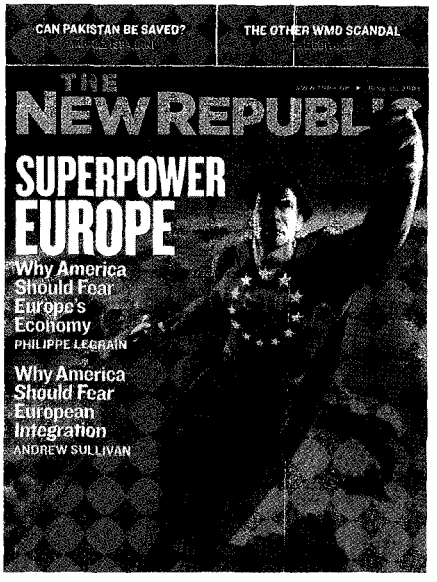
PETER CLARK
Senior Associate
U.S. Office on Colombia
Washington, D.C.

RACHEL VAN DONGEN REPLIES: Though my sources and several news outlets, including *The New York Times*, said otherwise, Peru and Bolivia have, in fact, never participated in aerial-fumigation efforts (they have, however, conducted manual eradication efforts). I regret the error. But it does little to discredit my argument—namely, that successful eradication in Colombia will allow the United States and its Andean allies to defeat coca and poppy production in neighboring countries. While it is true that USAID-sponsored manual eradication programs have met with significant success in places such as Putumayo, the overall decline of coca in Colombia can best be attributed to aerial fumigation. Many officials argue that, without the stick of fumigation, the carrot of offering farmers other crops in exchange for manually eradicating their own coca would never work. Furthermore, there have not been widespread manual eradication programs in coca-rich provinces such as Caquetá, which saw a decline of nearly 6,000 coca hectares from 2001 to 2002. Coca cultivation is shifting to other Colombian departments, but the U.S. government has not focused its spray efforts on those regions until now. In the Andean region as a whole, U.S. figures show that coca production decreased by 8 percent between 2001 and 2002, though Peru and Bolivia both saw increases in their levels of plantings. But eradication efforts of any kind are more likely to be successful in these countries as they lack the armed groups that have made Colombia's drug problem so complex.

MUTUALLY INCLUSIVE

ANDREW SULLIVAN WRITES ABOUT European integration in his article "The Euro Menace" (June 16). Menace?! That's like saying Michigan residents would be "menaced" by a strong economy in Ohio. Sullivan—like Bush—assumes that America's relationship with other nations must be combative. But the American way is to have equal, sovereign states working together in mutual understanding. That's why Michigan doesn't go to war with Ohio.

Let us shape the twenty-first century on the U.S. pattern of mutuality. Europe's integration does not menace the United States. Indeed, Europe's lack of integration dragged the United States into two wars in the last century. We can share the benefits of European peace in reduced warfare and in stronger markets for our products. We can influence



Europe more effectively when it is at peace than we could if it were not integrated but waged continual war among its states.

Sullivan's idea of being menaced itself creates antagonisms. We need not fear our friends. But if our churlishness, our efforts to "punish" nations that do not slavishly obey us, foments anti-American feelings throughout the world, then indeed we will ourselves have created the menace Sullivan fears. Let us advance mutuality among the states and apply it throughout the world.

JOEL WELTY
Blanchard, Michigan

SLAVE BRIGADE

JUDGE RICHARD A. POSNER MAKES a vigorous argument against the contentions of Michael Sandel and other communitarians that ending military conscription was a moral and civic mistake ("An Army of the Willing," May 19). Posner's main empirical claims are correct and far from trivial: The all-voluntary military has performed with great effectiveness, has helped rebuild

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bonds of trust between the military and the American people, and has provided important career and status opportunities for working-class young people. But Posner's moral argument is an instructive failure.

Let's begin with a conception of society as a system of cooperation for mutual advantage. A society is legitimate when the criterion of mutual advantage is broadly satisfied (versus, say, a situation in which the government or some group systematically coerces some for the benefit of others). Each citizen then has a duty to do his or her fair share to sustain the social arrangements from which all benefit, and society is justified in using its coercive power when necessary to ensure the performance of this duty. As John Stuart Mill, whom Posner wrongly drafts into the anti-conscription army, states in *On Liberty*, the state may legitimately require each citizen to bear "his share ... of the labours and sacrifices incurred for defending the society or its members from injury and molestation."

A counterargument urged by the late Robert Nozick is that we typically don't consent to the social benefits we receive and that the involuntary receipt of benefits does not trigger a duty to contribute. Mill anticipated, and rejected, that thesis, insisting that the duty to contribute does not rest on a social contract or a voluntarist account of social membership. Besides, the argument Socrates imputes to the Laws in the *Crito* is compelling: If a society isn't a prison, if as an adult you remain when you have the choice to leave, then you have in fact accepted the benefits along with whatever burdens the principle of social reciprocity may impose.

Posner contends, "Conscription could be described as a form of slavery, in the sense that a conscript is a person deprived of the ownership of his own labor." If slavery is immoral, so is the draft. Similarly, Nozick once contended that "taxation of earnings from labor is on a par with forced labor." (If Nozick were right, then the volunteer army that Posner supports, funded as it is with tax dollars, could also be described as on a par with forced labor.)

Both Posner's and Nozick's arguments prove too much. If each individual's ownership of his or her own labor is seen as absolute, then society as such becomes impossible, because no political community can operate without resources, which must ultimately come from *someone*. Public-choice theory predicts, and all of human history proves, that no polity of any size can subsist through voluntary contributions alone; the inevitable free-riders must be compelled by law, backed by force, to ante up.

Posner concedes, "There are circumstances in which military service is an obligation of citizenship." But there are no circumstances in which slavery is an obligation of citizenship. Moreover, it is not morally impermissible to volunteer for military service. But it is impermissible, and rightly forbidden, to voluntarily place oneself in slavery. Slavery and military service differ in kind, not degree. And, if there are circumstances in which military service is an obligation of citizenship, then the state is justified in enforcing that obligation through conscription, which is therefore *not* impermissible forced labor, let alone a form of slavery.

WILLIAM A. GALSTON
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University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

RICHARD A. POSNER REPLIES:
I fear that I was cryptic and, as a result, misled Professor William A. Galston; I do not think there is an actual disagreement between us. I am a nationalist, not a Nozickian; I do not doubt the right of the government to call on all citizens to serve; and I do not disapprove of conscription in principle. In calling it a form of slavery, I was meaning to be descriptive, not normative; it is compelled service. My intended point, with which I think Galston agrees, was simply that the values of community are not disserved by substituting a professional for a conscript army under the conditions that prevail today in our society. We could not have fought World War II with a professional army, because the levels of taxation, inflation, or borrowing necessary to pay wages high enough to attract the required number of volunteers would have caused severe economic distortions. With mass armies no longer necessary (or efficient), we do not have to force military service on the unwilling. ■

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Wrongly Accused

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

HAS THERE EVER been an administration more skilled at diversionary tactics than this one? Last week, the White House finally acknowledged what had been obvious for months: that the president should not have cited Iraq's efforts to procure uranium from Africa in his State of the Union speech. The Bushies must have feared the admission would provoke a media feeding frenzy. And they knew that, faced with a feeding frenzy, it often makes sense to give journalists someone to devour.

That's presidential p.r. 101. But it doesn't capture the Bush administration's dark genius. Scapegoats are usually low-level aides who carry a larger culture of malfeasance to politically embarrassing extremes: Think Oliver North in a Reagan administration given to reckless disregard of Congress or Webster Hubbell in a Clinton administration tainted by Arkansas sleaze.

There is just such a potential candidate in Uraniumgate. He is Robert G. Joseph, a nuclear-proliferation specialist at the National Security Council. And, before Bush's State of the Union, he reportedly twice called the CIA in an effort to get Langley's permission to include the uranium story in the speech. When his CIA counterpart explained the Agency's misgivings, Joseph didn't back down. Instead, he proposed alternative wording that pinned responsibility for the charge on the British. Here was at least one person in the White House who clearly knew the CIA considered the uranium story suspect yet pushed for its inclusion anyway. Classic scapegoat material.

But the administration isn't targeting Joseph, precisely because he *is* a classic scapegoat—a glaring example of a larger problem. Were the Bush administration to make him its political sacrifice, journalists and politicians would naturally turn their attention to his White House superiors. Did he tell them about the CIA's objections? Or, worse, did they tell him not to take no for an answer?

Instead, the White House has chosen a completely different kind of scapegoat: CIA Director George Tenet. National security adviser Condoleezza Rice has insisted that "if the CIA, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, had said, 'Take this out of the speech,' it would have been gone." The administration has practically begged the press to speculate about Tenet's job security. And pliant congressional Republicans, such as Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Pat Roberts, have picked up the thread, denouncing "what appears to be extremely sloppy handling of this issue from the outset by the CIA."

But, unlike Joseph, Tenet is not the low-level burglar caught with the bag of money. He's the (ineffective and compromised) cop. For a year and a half, Tenet and the CIA repeatedly tried to temper the Pentagon and the White House's hyping of the Iraq threat. As early as December 2001, in an interview with Salon.com, a CIA analyst called the hawks' obsession with Saddam Hussein a "pathology." In his January 2002 review of international weapons-of-mass-destruction proliferation, Tenet did not even mention a nuclear threat from Iraq. Frustrated by Langley's caution, hawks at the Pentagon created an in-house Iraq intelligence shop, and Defense Policy Board Chairman Richard Perle said the Agency's Iraq analysis "isn't worth the paper it is written on."

The conflict came to a head on October 7, 2002, when Tenet, in response to Senate Intelligence Committee questions, wrote that "Baghdad for now appears to be drawing a line short of conducting terrorist attacks with conventional or C.B.W. [chemical or biological weapons] against the United States." That evening, however, in a major speech in Cincinnati, Bush said that "Iraq could decide on any given day to provide a biological or chemical weapon to a terrorist." The press pounced on the discrepancy, and Tenet was forced to claim there was "no inconsistency" between his views and the president's.

Tenet didn't just take a comparatively dim view of the Iraq threat in general; he took a dim view of the uranium claim in particular. *The Washington Post* has reported that Tenet personally intervened with Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley to keep the discredited assertion out of Bush's Cincinnati speech. When Tenet sat behind Colin Powell at the secretary of state's February 5 U.N. presentation, the uranium charge was again absent. And Tenet avoided mentioning it in his February 11 testimony before the Senate. Tenet (and his subordinates) was clearly negligent (maybe willfully so) in not keeping the uranium charge out of the State of the Union as well. But suggesting that he deserves primary blame for its inclusion gets the story exactly backward.

Which is just how the Bush administration wants it. By blaming someone who actually (if inconsistently) *opposed* hyping the Iraq threat, the Bush administration is trying to shift the media's attention from its own mendacity to the intelligence community's incompetence.

As it happens, that's a worthy story—one the Bush administration resolutely tried to quash (by first opposing and then obstructing a serious investigation into the intelligence failures preceding September 11, 2001)—until now. It may be that Tenet deserves to be fired for the CIA's failures in the war on terrorism. But he clearly doesn't deserve to be fired for insufficiently fighting to remove the uranium charge. By targeting him for that, the White House is deflecting attention from Joseph's superiors, the people who pushed the CIA for an alarmist assessment of the Iraq threat and, in this case, may have crossed an ethical bright line.

For instance, how did Hadley, the man Tenet told of his misgivings about the uranium charge before the Cincinnati speech, allow it to reappear in the State of the Union? What about his boss, Rice, who cited the uranium claim in a January *New York Times* op-ed? Did she not know that Tenet had told her deputy it was dubious months before? Or her boss, Vice President Dick Cheney, who, according to *Time*, showed the personal interest in the uranium charge that spurred the CIA to send an investigator to Niger? Did Cheney not know the investigation he had initiated found the story to be untrue?

There are many questions, and many suspects, in this unfolding drama. And the press would be well-served by this simple rule of thumb: Wherever the Bush administration points, look the other way.

PETER BEINART

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A Hopeful Precedent for Urban Schools

Americans value fairness and equal opportunity, principles that are firmly embedded in the U.S. Constitution, and in every state constitution as well. But when it comes to education, millions of children in big urban school districts across the country have nothing close to a fair and equal opportunity to learn. In fact, many state education bureaucracies and public school funding formulas systematically shortchange urban districts and ignore the huge challenges they face. But a recent, closely-watched court ruling could help change that.

New York State's highest court just declared that the state is violating its constitution because its school funding formula fails to ensure access to a "sound basic education" for all students, regardless of where they live. This ruling applies to New York City, but has national implications because of similar actions underway in other states. The court made clear that the issue isn't equal funding; it's the equality of the educational opportunity that matters.

Most of the students in the nation's largest urban school districts come from poor families. Although they have just as much potential as other kids, they often begin school with none of the educational advantages—like good preschools and stimulating summer and weekend activities—that more affluent families take for granted. The odds are stacked against them from the start.

What poor children need are skilled, experienced teachers, smaller classes, enriched learning programs and extra help to keep from falling behind. As the court confirmed, what they're likely to get are the most poorly equipped schools, overcrowded classrooms, the most inexperienced and underpaid teachers, and none of the learning support needed if they're to have a decent chance of succeeding.

The verdict in New York says clearly that shortchanging urban schools isn't just wrong; it's illegal. It's a shame that in a nation wedded to principles of fairness and equal opportunity, it takes legal action to stop these funding inequities. But if that's what it takes, we should take heart in this ruling and hope it serves as a compelling precedent.

Increased funding can provide better teachers, facilities and instrumentalities of learning...and yield better student performance.

—**New York State Court of Appeals**
June 26, 2003

Sandra Feldman

Sandra Feldman, President, American Federation of Teachers

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16 Words

On July 7, the White House admitted, after weeks of controversy, that a 16-word assertion by President Bush in his January State of the Union address—"the British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa"—should not have been included in the speech. The admission, presumably intended to quell doubts about the administration's use of intelligence in the lead-up to the Iraq war, instead had the opposite effect, raising questions about how the claim—which had long been debunked in intelligence circles—made its way into so important an address. In recent days, the administration has responded to these questions with a series of intertwined excuses and obfuscations, many of them contradictory and all of them implausible. For the most part, they fall into three categories: *We didn't know the Niger claim was inaccurate; it wasn't actually inaccurate; and, even if it was inaccurate, it doesn't matter.*

We didn't know.

The administration's primary explanation is that, even though the Niger uranium claim was widely considered dubious within the intelligence community, that doubt was never clearly transmitted to the White House. "After the speech, information was learned about the forged documents [supporting the Niger allegation]. With the advantage of hindsight, it's known now what was not known by the White House prior to the speech," since-departed White House spokesman Ari Fleischer explained on July 9.

But there is abundant evidence that senior White House officials were aware of the CIA's doubts regarding the Niger story long before the State of the Union. Nearly a year earlier, in February 2002, the CIA had dispatched former Ambassador Joseph Wilson to Niger to investigate the claim about uranium purchases. When the CIA debriefed him in March, his findings were emphatic: As Wilson explained in a *New York Times* op-ed on July 6, "It did not take long to conclude that it was highly doubtful that any such transaction had ever taken place." CIA Director George Tenet claimed on July 11 that Wilson was sent to Niger by junior nonproliferation experts at the CIA acting "on their own initiative" and that senior administration officials were unaware of his mission. But this is not true. Wilson was told by CIA officials that the mission had been specifically requested by the office of the vice president. Indeed, Dick Cheney's chief of staff, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, told *Time* magazine that Cheney had "asked a question about the implication of the [uranium] report." And, as Wilson tells The New Republic, "When an executive agency is tasked to find something out and it gets an answer, it goes back to the person who requested it." For the White House to suggest that Cheney's office was unaware of the results of Wilson's inquiry strains credulity.

Nor was Wilson the only official to raise doubts about the Niger story. Around the same time, his account was supplemented by a skeptical report from the American ambassador to Niger, Barbro Owens-Kirkpatrick, and by General Carlton Fulford Jr., who visited Niger and communicated his doubts about the uranium allegation to the military's Joint Staff at the Pentagon. These misgivings were known and widely shared in the intelligence community: Indeed, the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) for Iraq included questions about whether the alleged contacts between Iraq and Niger regarding uranium had, in fact, taken place.

Moreover, there is strong evidence that the CIA clearly conveyed its doubts about the Niger allegation to the White House on more than one occasion prior to the State of the Union. When Bush wanted to include the claim in an October 7, 2002, speech in Cincinnati, Tenet personally intervened, imploring Condoleezza Rice's National Security Council (NSC) deputy, Stephen Hadley, to cut the allegation from the speech, which he did. The idea that no one involved with the State of the Union was aware of this earlier, emphatic intervention is implausible. And when the latter speech was being written, the CIA again raised questions about the Niger assertion. According to *The New York Times*, when NSC proliferation staffer Robert G. Joseph called his CIA counterpart, Alan Foley, to ask about including the allegation in the State of the Union, Foley told Joseph the CIA was not confident about the information. Joseph later called Foley again to ask what the CIA made of the fact that the British intelligence believed the Niger claim. Foley responded that the CIA had informed its British counterparts of its doubts about the story. Rather than leave the matter there, after receiving two clear notices that the CIA was skeptical of the claim, Joseph continued to press Foley, asking if it would be accurate to say the British were reporting the Niger uranium claim; Foley conceded it would.

It wasn't inaccurate.

Even as the administration concedes that the Niger claim should not have been included in the State of the Union, it also argues that what the president said in the speech was not actually inaccurate. The first rationale for this conclusion is the one presaged in the Joseph-Foley exchange—i.e., that Bush didn't say Saddam had sought to purchase uranium in Africa; rather, he said the British said Saddam had sought to purchase uranium in

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Africa. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld made this case in a July 13 appearance on NBC's "Meet the Press," arguing that the president's words were "technically correct." "The U.K. did say that and still says that," Rumsfeld explained.

But, even allowing for the most Clintonian parsing, what the president said in the State of the Union was not accurate. Bush, after all, did not state that the British "believed" Saddam had tried to buy uranium or even that the British "claimed" he had done so. Rather, he said the British "had learned" that this was the case, a phrasing clearly implying that the president believed the Brits to be correct—a position his own intelligence agencies had explicitly disavowed.

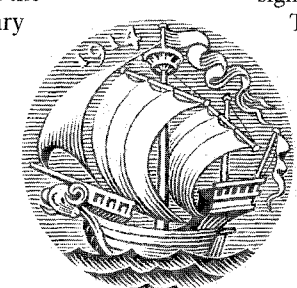
Administration officials also argue that the president's statement was technically accurate because it refers not specifically to Niger but to Saddam's efforts to obtain uranium "from Africa." "It was not this Niger document alone," Rice declared on July 11. "There are even other African countries that are cited in the NIE, not just Niger." But, on July 7, Fleischer had specifically told reporters that the president's allegation was "based and predicated on the yellow cake from Niger." And, even if the president had intended to refer to Iraqi uranium purchases elsewhere in Africa, there are no grounds for believing this broader statement to be any more accurate than the specific Niger claim. The classified version of the NIE apparently does include references to possible Iraqi transactions elsewhere in Africa. But, according to a senior intelligence official quoted in *The Washington Post*, the intelligence about those countries is considered even less reliable than the discredited Niger claim.

It doesn't matter.

The administration's most audacious defense, however, is that, even if Bush's Niger assertion was inaccurate and the White House had reason to believe it was inaccurate, it's not that big a deal. Describing the significance of the Niger claim as "enormously overblown," Rice explained on July 13, "It is unfortunate that this one sentence, this sixteen words, remained in the State of the Union. But this in no way has any effect on the president's larger case about Iraqi efforts to reconstitute the nuclear program and, most importantly, the bigger picture of Iraq's weapons-of-mass-destruction program."

This is simply not the case. Although at different times the administration made different arguments for war with Iraq, its central rationale was Saddam's alleged pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. And no weapons inspire greater fear than nuclear bombs. This is why, despite the fact that evidence of Iraq's nuclear capability was far less compelling than evidence of its chemical or biological capabilities, administration officials took pains to cite Saddam's nuclear ambitions in virtually every presentation leading up to the war. As Rice explained to the American public on September 8, 2002, "We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud." According to *Time*, more than 180 members of Congress explicitly cited the threat of Saddam acquiring nuclear weapons as a reason for their support of the resolution granting Bush authority to use force against Iraq.

In the months before and after the war, the administration has presented to the public five pieces of evidence that Iraq was reconstituting a nuclear weapons program. One of those, the claim that magnets purchased by Saddam would be appropriate for use in enriching uranium, was first raised publicly after the State of the Union address, in Secretary of State Colin Powell's February 5 presentation to the United Nations. It has since been debunked by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Another, Bush's claim in the October 7, 2002, Cincinnati speech that Saddam "has held numerous meetings with Iraqi nuclear scientists," is so vague that the administration rarely cited it in subsequent arguments. And a third, that "satellite photographs reveal that Iraq is rebuilding facilities at sites that have been part of its nuclear program in the past," as Bush put it in Cincinnati, was dismissed by weapons inspectors on the ground.



The only two pieces of evidence of an Iraqi nuclear program cited in the State of the Union were the Niger claim and Saddam's attempted acquisition of aluminum tubes "suitable for nuclear weapons production." Of these, the Niger allegation was the more significant, for two reasons. First, intelligence concerns that the aluminum tubes in question might not, in fact, be suitable for nuclear weapons production had already been raised in the press. (Since then, the IAEA and British intelligence have concluded they were not suitable.) Second, Iraq's acquisition of uranium would suggest a far more immediate threat than its acquisition of aluminum tubes to be used for uranium enrichment. According to the NIE, Iraq's acquisition of weapons-grade fissile material would likely determine when Saddam would be capable of producing his first nuclear weapon. "If Baghdad acquires sufficient weapons-grade fissile material from abroad," the unclassified version of the NIE states, "it could make a nuclear weapon within a year." Bush himself made this case in Cincinnati, noting, "If the Iraqi regime is able to produce, buy, or steal an amount of highly enriched uranium a little larger than a single softball, it could have a nuclear weapon in less than a year."

The Niger allegation, then, was the most compelling evidence in the administration's most compelling national security case for war with Iraq. But its significance goes still deeper. Those 16 words were merely the most egregious example of a clear pattern: Convinced of the rightness of its Iraq policy, the Bush administration repeatedly—and deliberately—misrepresented intelligence to paint Saddam as a greater threat to the United States than he actually was. That is the reality the administration is trying to conceal with its welter of contradictory explanations.

In the midst of all this evasion and equivocation, it is worth recalling what John F. Kennedy said when taking blame for the Bay of Pigs disaster in April 1961: "I'm the responsible officer of the government." Whether he recognizes it or not, the same is true of George W. Bush. ■

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NOTEBOOK

BRITAIN FOLLOWS BUSH'S LEAD . . . BUSH FOLLOWS SOUTH AFRICA'S

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

AS NOTED IN THIS WEEK'S EDITORIAL, one of the Bush administration's many defenses for its decision to include in the president's State of the Union address the well-refuted allegation that Iraq was seeking uranium from Niger is that, because it cited British intelligence, the statement was "technically accurate" even if the allegation was false ("16 Words," page 8). Indeed, as Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld argued on NBC's "Meet the Press" last Sunday, the British *still* believe the Niger uranium story. "[T]he U.K. did say that and still says that," Rumsfeld lectured Tim Russert. "They haven't changed their mind, the United Kingdom intelligence people." And it's true: Tony Blair's intelligence services are insisting that the basis for the claim came not from crudely forged documents from Italy but from a different, as yet undisclosed, source. A British intelligence official told the London *Guardian* last week, "The information in the British Government's September dossier regarding Niger categorically did not come from the forged Italian documents; it came from our own source, . . . an entirely separate and credible source." As a result, Ari Fleischer insisted in his farewell briefing on Monday that "this remains an issue about did Iraq seek uranium in Africa, an issue that very well may be true. We don't know if it's true—but nobody, nobody, can say it is wrong."

Nobody, that is, except perhaps the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Back in February, the United States and the United Kingdom finally provided the IAEA with a dozen pages of documentation to corroborate their allegations of a reconstituted Iraqi nuclear weapons program. The IAEA's chief Iraq official, Jacques Baute, determined in the span of a day that the documents substantiating the Niger accusation were forgeries. Not wishing to close the book on the issue, Baute asked the U.S. and British governments to give his team any remaining intelligence they possessed that would bear the charge out. Eventually, as an IAEA official explained to THE NEW REPUBLIC, Washington and London told Baute's office through emissaries that "no, we don't have other evidence" to support the charge about Iraq buying uranium from Niger. (Or from any other country, for that matter.) Now, we're meant to believe that MI-6 somehow substantiated the allegation but never shared its new, bulletproof intelligence with either the CIA or an expert international body? Sounds like Tony Blair's government is taking damage-control lessons from—well, from the Bush administration.

Donald Rumsfeld

WITH ENEMIES LIKE THESE

THE CLAIMS IN POISON PUNDIT ANN Coulter's latest book, *Treason*—which paints liberals as traitors—have proved repulsive enough to churn even the stomachs of old conservative allies such as David Horowitz and *The Wall Street Journal*'s Dorothy Rabinowitz. But these critics are late in joining the anti-Coulter wing of conservatism. With much fanfare, *National Review* staked out this position nearly two years ago. After Coulter made her famous post–9/11 call to arms—"We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity"—*National Review Online* (NRO) dismissed her from her slot as a contributing writer. At the time, Jonah Goldberg, the site's editor, wrote, "We ended the relationship because she behaved with a total lack of professionalism, friendship, and loyalty." So it's a tad surprising that, at a moment when Coulter's rhetorical excesses are uglier than ever, NRO has hopped back on her bandwagon. On its homepage, NRO has been selling *Treason* to its readers—at a 25 percent discount—through the National Review Book Service (NRBS), which promises, "[O]ur board of editors, along with our book reviewers, has chosen each book because it is a true conservative work." Indeed, the NRBS posts glowing praise of Coulter's "trenchant, witty analysis." Why would the site suddenly say such nice things about the writer it canned? Because NRBS is run by a company called Eagle Publishing, and, in exchange for lending its brand name to NRBS, *National Review* pockets a commission off of every copy sold through the site. After all, who needs professionalism, friendship, or loyalty when there's a buck to be made?

GOING SOUTH

AS PRESIDENT BUSH PREPARED FOR his five-day trip to Africa last week, Africans and Africa-watchers had good reason to believe the administration was pushing for genuine political change in Zimbabwe, which is suffocating under Robert Mugabe's homicidal rule. Shortly before departing on the

DAVID COWLES

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trip, Bush called for a return to democracy in Zimbabwe, and, in an op-ed published June 24 in *The New York Times*, Secretary of State Colin Powell lashed out at the Mugabe regime as having an "absolute monopoly of coercive power but no legitimacy or moral authority." Even better, the administration seemed prepared to act on its words. Recognizing South Africa's role as a regional power and one of the few nations with leverage over Mugabe, the Bush administration has been pressing Pretoria to take a stronger line, despite President Thabo Mbeki's insistence that the problem was best handled through "quiet diplomacy." In his op-ed, Powell publicly singled out the South African government, writing that it "can and should play a stronger and more sustained role that fully reflects the urgency of Zimbabwe's crisis." As Zimbabwean author Cathy Buckle told TNR, "We were sure that Bush, the most powerful man on earth, would persuade Mbeki to stand on the podium and say that rape, torture, murder, oppression, and lawlessness were a part of daily life in Zimbabwe."

Imagine the disappointment, then, when instead Bush and Mbeki stood on the podium and chuckled when a reporter asked if they had resolved their differences on Zimbabwe. "[W]e were certain a clever reporter would try to use the Zimbabwe issue as a way to maybe create tensions which don't exist," Bush chided. Indeed, far from pressing Mbeki to strive harder for change in Zimbabwe or indicating that the United States might demonstrate any leadership on the issue, Bush called Mbeki the "point man" on Zimbabwe and said that he had no "intention of second-guessing his tactics." Mbeki, for his part, took the opportunity to announce that Mugabe's ruling party was currently "engaged in discussions" with the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), suggesting progress was being made. But it wasn't. Within one hour, the MDC, whose leader is awaiting trial in Harare for treason, clarified that there were no such talks ongoing. When Powell was asked about the discrepancy the next day, he could only say, "With respect to what negotiations may be going on between parties, I can't speak to that." Can't or won't?

TV ANNOUNCEMENT, TAKE TWO

A FEW WEEKS AGO, IN ANNOUNCING Lee Siegel's elevation to the position of TV critic at TNR, we got a little carried away. It is not the case that this magazine has never had a TV critic. Mark Crispin Miller served in that post with distinction and influence between 1979 and 1981. So let us restate our enthusiasm for our current man by saying gladly that his writing fully meets the high standard set by the writing of his predecessor. ■

Inside the Box | Bruce Reed

UNSAFE IN ANY YEAR Nader says he won't run if Democratic nominee is liberal enough: "I'm not going to all that trouble if they can lose without my help."

NADER: DINAR, REUTERS PHOTO ARCHIVE

THE BUCK STOPS THERE Bush joins Condi in blaming State of the Union mistake on Tenet: "Now I have an MBA from Harvard and a CYA from Rice."

WHAT, ME WORRY? White House insists latest credibility flap will blow over. Bush: "If the American people cared about intelligence estimates, I wouldn't be here."

SELF-MEDICATION House votes to give ex-members better drug benefits than other retirees. Hastert: "The prescription-drug bill is supposed to get us all reelected, but we're not taking any chances."

TEX AND THE CITY HBO describes new series about K Street as hybrid of "real fiction": "For example, we'll have bribes, but we'll pretend they're illegal!"

TOLL-FREE Twenty-three million Americans sign up for Do-Not-Call Registry. Cheney: "We won't be hearing from that September 11 commission again anytime soon."

SAVING FACE U.S. will remove Saddam's portrait from Iraqi dinar. Bremer: "Another valuable lesson—in a democracy, the faces we put on currency have to be dead."

IT'S YOUR MONEY Anti-tax man Grover Norquist complains that, since Bush took office, it takes Americans 17 days per year longer to pay for the cost of government: "That's one whole unemployment check!"

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On the Hill

Don't Look Now

BY MICHAEL CROWLEY AND SPENCER ACKERMAN

IN THE HUSHED halls of the Hart Senate Office Building last Thursday afternoon, there was a bustle of activity outside room H-219. A group of senators streamed through tinted-glass doors, leading to a soundproof steel vault in which the Senate Intelligence Committee holds its classified hearings. An academic-looking man in thin-rimmed glasses arrived with an aide in a white Navy uniform. This was Doug Feith, a senior Pentagon policy official, called to testify as part of the committee's examination of whether prewar intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) was exaggerated or inaccurate. As Feith chatted with staffers, Senator John Warner, a Virginia Republican, strolled up, threw an arm around his shoulder, and led him down the hall, whispering secretively in his ear. Soon Feith and Warner disappeared into the hearing room.

For now, this is the most anyone without a top-secret clearance can see of the Senate Intelligence Committee's inquiry into the Iraq WMD scandal. Some Democrats want to force these hearings into the public eye. One aide dreams of a summer spent "watching these [administration] guys squirm on C-SPAN." But, so far, they have run into two major obstacles. One is the committee chairman, Kansas Republican Pat Roberts, who seems determined to protect the White House from anything but low-key, secret questioning. The other is the committee's ranking Democrat, Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia, who seems reluctant and ill-prepared to challenge Roberts. Growing political pressure may yet force the committee to mount a more vigorous public investigation. But Democrats aren't counting on either Roberts or Rockefeller to make it happen.

THE TWO SENATORS took over in January, after committee term limits forced their predecessors, Florida Democrat Bob Graham and Alabama Republican Richard Shelby, to step down. In retrospect, Democrats are sorry they're gone. Shelby, although generally a partisan Republican, had an abiding hostility to the intelligence establishment—he has long wanted CIA Director George Tenet fired, for instance—that sometimes led to clashes with the White House. Graham had an obsession with raw intelligence data that gave his stinging critiques of the administration credibility. Roberts, on the other hand—a folksy jokester who has been named "funniest senator" by *Washingtonian* magazine—is a loyal defender of the White House. As questions have multiplied about the intelligence on Iraq, Roberts has seemed less interested in looking for errors and abuses than in political damage control. In early June, Warner—who chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee—told the *Los Angeles Times* that he would support joint open hearings on the issue with Roberts; Roberts, he assured, "had been receptive to the idea." But, shortly after a Senate GOP meeting with Vice President Dick Cheney the following day, Roberts said such talk was "premature." Since then, Roberts has been busy lashing out at the president's critics. "Some of the attacks have been simply politics and for political gain," he said at a June 11 press conference. "I will not allow the committee to be politicized or to be used as an unwitting tool for any political strategist."

But Roberts hasn't allowed his committee to be used for a substantive investigation, either. Democrats say the inquiry's format is designed to sideline them. Roberts has created four separate areas of inquiry into possible failures of Iraq intelligence: WMD, Al Qaeda links, human rights, and regional threat. The latter two, of course, are not matters of public dispute—and, not coincidentally, are the two topics Roberts has allowed Democratic staffers to oversee. The first two—politically explosive—areas are being managed by GOP staffers. The team investigating WMD issues includes three Republican aides and just one Democrat. Such is Roberts's idea of a "bipartisan" effort. What's more, at least two of the committee's GOP staffers are former officials at the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency, a focal point of the current controversy, creating a potential conflict of interest if they're called upon to investigate their own past analyses or those of former colleagues.

Roberts, however, doesn't seem particularly interested in a dispassionate analysis of how the administration developed its claims about Iraq's weapons programs. In fact, the worse the White House's use of prewar intelligence looks, the more Roberts defends it. Last week, on the day CIA Director George Tenet took the fall for a reference in the State of the Union address to Iraq's efforts to acquire uranium in Africa, Roberts issued a remarkable statement complaining not about any breach of credibility but about leaks. "What now concerns me most ..." he said, "is what appears to be a campaign of press leaks by the CIA in an effort to discredit the president." It's a little ironic that Roberts, who fired an intelligence staffer in May for discussing *unclassified* information outside the committee, is so animated by intelligence leaks. On March 20, the day after the U.S. strike on a bunker where Saddam Hussein was thought to be hiding, Roberts told a group of newspaper editors that the Bush administration had used "what we call human intelligence [that] indicated the location of Saddam Hussein and his leadership." Some intelligence officials were stunned by the comments, which soon appeared throughout the media and may have jeopardized CIA sources in Baghdad. "People flipped out," says one.

Democrats say Rockefeller has not served as a particularly effective counterweight to Roberts. Despite his mighty name, bank account, and six-foot-seven-inch frame, Rocke-

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feller is a low-key figure—a senator in the old collegial mold rather than a media-savvy partisan warrior. And he's a relative newcomer to the world of spooks and secrets, having only joined the intelligence committee in 2001. Some Democrats complain that, in contrast to his predecessor, Graham, Rockefeller lacks the necessary expertise for his current role. Rockefeller himself warned as much last fall, telling *Roll Call* the committee's term limits were "a big mistake." "I know a lot about health care, but it took me about 10 to 12 years to learn that because it is very complicated. This is much more complicated." Sometimes Rockefeller's learning curve is evident. During a July 12 interview with National Public Radio on the Niger uranium fiasco, for instance, he incorrectly referred to Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, who apparently played a key role in the episode, as a Cheney aide—a small but important distinction.

More important, Democrats say Rockefeller has allowed Roberts to roll over him. For instance, in early June Rockefeller publicly threatened that, with the support of four other committee Democrats, he could force Roberts to conduct an open investigation. In fact, Rockefeller overstated his power—committee rules only allow members to force a *closed* meeting—but previous intelligence chairmen have generally honored such minority-party requests for broader investigations. When Roberts refused to observe that precedent, Rockefeller essentially yielded. And, although he had the power to block it, on June 20 Rockefeller signed off on Roberts's plan to hold a handful of closed hearings, with the vague promise of one open hearing in September. The news came "to the serious dismay of the caucus," says a Senate Democratic staffer. "Many in the caucus think Rockefeller is being used."

Rockefeller's defenders say he has been restrained, in part, by a desire not to play into the hands of Republicans eager to dismiss the WMD debate as a partisan game. As long as the press continues to push the Iraq-intelligence story forward, they argue, there's no sense in letting Republicans such as Roberts accuse them of political motives. "Rockefeller has decided he's going to give this an opportunity to play out a little more and make it clear whether Roberts is doing this fairly and objectively," says a Democratic staffer. But this wait-and-see approach ignores the fact that Republicans, including Roberts, are *already* insisting that the WMD intelligence questions are politically motivated. Nor is there any sign that Roberts plans to play fairly—his insistence on closed-door hearings and his handling of them should have made that abundantly clear. Worse, Democrats risk abdicating responsibility if they overestimate the media's power to keep this story afloat. Reporters confronting the tight-lipped Bush administration may have to let the story drop for want of information, whereas a congressional committee that can subpoena witnesses stands a far better chance of getting to the truth.

Still, some hope that, if the media's revelations get bad enough, even Roberts will be shamed into action. "While [Roberts] has a tendency to be partisan, he also has a fiercely independent streak," says Dan Glickman, a former Kansas congressman who knows Roberts well. "By and large, Pat tries to do the right thing. I don't think he would lay down and play dead just to protect the president if he thought the president was wrong." So far, though, the Intelligence Committee chairman is showing no signs of life, and Rockefeller is doing nothing to resuscitate him. ■

America defends Robert Mugabe.

Mistrial

BY JOEL MOWBRAY

WRITING ABOUT THE "terrible human rights conditions in Zimbabwe" in a June 24 *New York Times* op-ed, Secretary of State Colin Powell blasted Zimbabwe's president, Robert Mugabe, as a despot with "an absolute monopoly of coercive power, but no legitimacy or moral authority." Sanderson Makombe would agree. According to court documents and testimony, on April 15, 2000, Makombe and two friends were campaigning for Zimbabwe's opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change. On their way home, supporters of Mugabe's ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), ambushed their red pickup truck. The three were forced from the vehicle and savagely beaten with metal bars, stones, and fists. Makombe was lucky. He managed to escape into bushes. From there, he watched ZANU-PF supporters douse his unconscious friend, Tapfuma Chiminya Tachiona, with gasoline and set him on fire. He saw them do the same to his other friend, Talent Mabika—while she was conscious. Both Chiminya and Mabika died.

The details of this savage attack came to light when Makombe gave a sworn deposition in a U.S. court case in which five survivors and three estates of those killed by Mugabe's goons sued the dictator and ZANU-PF. Using a law enacted in 1992, the Torture Victim Prevention Act, which lets U.S. courts hear cases in which citizens of foreign countries sue other foreign nationals for torture, the Zimbabweans filed a civil suit against Mugabe and his party in federal court in New York in fall 2000. The eight plaintiffs were awarded a $71.2 million judgment in December 2002. But the victims have not collected, since the case has been appealed.

The appeal, however, did not come from Mugabe or

Joel Mowbray is author of the forthcoming book DANGEROUS DIPLOMACY: HOW THE STATE DEPARTMENT THREATENS AMERICA'S SECURITY.

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ZANU-PF. Just five days before *The New York Times* ran Powell's op-ed, lawyers for the U.S. government, at the behest of the State Department, filed a brief appealing the judgment on behalf of Mugabe's ZANU-PF, which had chosen not to fight the suit. State's behavior is not unprecedented: It participates in lawsuits against foreign governments and heads of state. But this case is more extreme. State Department officials say that, in protecting the Zimbabwean leader and his party, they are trying to prevent a precedent that would make it easier for Americans to be sued in foreign courts. Yet American officials already enjoy numerous protections from litigation overseas, and the legal arguments State makes to support its stance in the Mugabe case are feeble. Worse, by filing an appeal, Foggy Bottom has reassured tyrants and their political parties that, despite U.S. rhetoric and legislation promoting human rights, Washington will go out of its way to protect torturers in U.S. courts.

ALTHOUGH THE TORTURE Victim Prevention Act allowed the Zimbabweans to sue in the United States, for U.S. courts to have jurisdiction over the dictator, the plaintiffs had to physically serve him with notice of the suit—an action lawyers call "service of process." So the survivors served Mugabe with two lawsuits in September 2000 while he was visiting Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in Harlem. They filed one against him and one against ZANU-PF. Even though Mugabe was not serving a diplomatic function by visiting the church, his government argued that, as a foreign leader, he should receive immunity, and the lawsuits should be thrown out.

State agreed, and U.S. government lawyers argued that the lawsuit should be dismissed. Government attorneys contended that, not only was Mugabe immune from being sued, he was immune from even receiving formal notice that his political party was being sued. This was a novel legal argument. Though sovereign immunity has historically shielded statesmen from lawsuits, it has not prevented political parties from being served with suits.

Ultimately, the judge did not buy this new argument. In an opinion that exceeded 50 pages, Judge Victor Marrero agreed with State that Mugabe was personally immune from litigation. But he found that ZANU-PF did not deserve immunity and that Mugabe could be served in his role as leader of the party. Since neither Mugabe nor ZANU-PF offered a defense, the ruling paved the way for a default judgment of $71.2 million for the eight plaintiffs.

Though Mugabe and ZANU-PF made clear that they intended to ignore the lawsuit and decline to appeal, American lawyers in June 2003 made the U.S. government a party to the case so it could appeal on behalf of Mugabe and ZANU-PF. (Only parties to a case have the right to appeal judgments.) Since this was one of the first cases tried under the 1992 legislation, if State had not established the precedent of intervening on behalf of the party, it would have been harder for Foggy Bottom to do so in similar cases in the future.

Because the U.S. government was wading into uncharted legal waters by filing an appeal on behalf of a foreign entity that chose not to appeal, lawyers for the plaintiffs filed a motion to dismiss. Responding to the motion, the government's brief only mustered a thin legal justification. They argued that, historically, the executive branch had sole discretion over which foreign leaders receive immunity. Yet Congress removed the power to grant immunity from the executive more than 25 years ago by passing the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act. American lawyers also argued that allowing Mugabe to accept service of the lawsuit on behalf of ZANU-PF would violate the Vienna Convention—it would be an "impairment" of the despot's "dignity" under the convention, which states that diplomats should be free of attacks on their dignity. Again, this was a weak argument, given that the United States has already damaged Mugabe's "dignity" by imposing sanctions on him.

State's political rationale for appealing made as little sense as its legal arguments. According to a State Department official, Foggy Bottom pushed for expansive immunity for Mugabe and ZANU-PF "in order to protect U.S. interests overseas." State officials say they don't want American officials being served court papers, and then being sued, when they are overseas on diplomatic missions. But this is a hollow fear. American officials abroad have considerable protection from legal action already. The United States often pays off foreign victims when there is even a potential for lawsuits, and State has high-quality lawyers on retainer in most countries around the world to defend American officials should cases ever come to trial. As a result, few American officials face civil lawsuits abroad.

U.S. GOVERNMENT LAWYERS seem to find siding with a brutal tyrant somewhat uncomfortable. One part of the brief reads, "The government's arguments here in no way contradict or undermine the substantial diplomatic and economic measures being taken by the Executive to attack the shameful conduct of the current regime in Zimbabwe. The United States Department of State has forcefully condemned the government of Zimbabwe's role in the politically motivated violence that is the subject of this case." The brief continues, "The United States is deeply sympathetic to the Plaintiffs' suffering at the hands of a despotic regime that we oppose."

But neither the Justice Department lawyers who filed the appeal nor the State Department attorneys who lobbied for it were "deeply sympathetic" enough to side with the victims of Mugabe's torture campaign. And neither set of lawyers was "deeply sympathetic" enough to the moral and legal costs of defending the interests of the dictator and his party in a U.S. court. It is possible that Powell did not know of his department's involvement in the Mugabe case. Secretaries of state do not always know of the actions of their massive bureaucracies. If he had, he probably would not have written in the *Times* op-ed, "We have ended all official assistance to the government of Zimbabwe." Or at least one would hope. ■

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Campaign Journal

Dean's List

BY RYAN LIZZA

NOW THAT THE Democratic presidential campaigns have had a few weeks to digest Howard Dean's rise from underdog to top-tier candidate, the field has begun formulating plans for dealing with the scrappy Vermontster. And, while the particular strategies vary, there is one common response from all the major campaigns: This is great for us!

Start with John Kerry, the candidate who has the most to fear from Dean. The Kerry campaign's initial response to the Dean surge has been to declare that the nomination is now a two-man race. Dean's success "increases the sense that the race is beginning to tier" says Kerry campaign manager Jim Jordan. "The Kerry and Dean campaigns have opened up a real advantage over everyone else." There are two good reasons for the Kerry campaign to frame the race this way. First, Kerry's people still believe Dean can be defeated relatively easily. After all, the conventional wisdom persists that Dean would be weak in the general election and that pragmatic primary voters who want, above all else, to beat President Bush will eventually abandon the former Vermont governor. A contest with Dean, says Jordan, is "a contest we're looking forward to." And, second, the more the race is about Dean and Kerry, the less it is about the other candidates. Far from shattering Kerry's aura of front-runnerdom, his campaign claims that Dean's rise has confirmed it. "The fundamental dynamic of the race," Jordan argues, "has been to define the challenger to John Kerry." Now that he has been defined, Kerry's campaign can start taking him down.

They've started to do this with a triple strategy of co-opting, contrasting, and containing. In 2000, George W. Bush, beaten in New Hampshire by John McCain's reformist insurgency, brazenly stole McCain's message, showing up in South Carolina re-branded as a "reformer with results." Similarly, Kerry is now co-opting some of Dean's messages and tactics. Kerry's speeches are now peppered with the energy and anger that has won over many Deaniacs. And one can't help but notice how quickly Kerry has adopted Internet organizing. The campaign recently inked a deal with Meetup.com and now regularly implores supporters to sign up for the service. And, while Dean still has ten times more people signed up on Meetup, Kerry's numbers are starting to move. Talk of building a grassroots army has even made its way into the senator's speeches. The Kerry campaign shrugs off the copycat charges. "We're certainly not going to cede the word 'grassroots' to the Dean campaign," says Jordan, who notes that Kerry was marching with Vietnam Veterans Against the War "a couple of decades before Dean entered public life." As for the sprinklings of rage now appearing in Kerry's stump speech, Jordan counters, "Howard Dean, for all of his flashes of heat and anger, didn't invent passion in politics."

The second part of the Kerry campaign's response to Dean will be contrasting the two men's records. "At some point, we'll—in a respectful, professional way—be drawing distinctions," Jordan explains. Just as conservatives loyal to Bush argued that McCain wasn't really one of them, there has been a low-level Kerry campaign targeted at liberal Democrats, pointing out Dean's heresies on guns, Social Security, and the teachers' unions. But this represents a tricky strategy for Kerry, who has spent the last two years positioning himself as a centrist and doggedly fighting the label "Massachusetts liberal." After all, Kerry probably assumed his toughest primary challengers would be on his right—Democratic Leadership Council darlings such as Al Gore, John Edwards, and Joe Lieberman. (Again, this is the mirror image of Bush in 2000 who, after preparing for a challenge from the right by Steve Forbes, wound up getting one from the left by McCain.) Rather than risk a wholesale shift to the left, then, Kerry's aides are emphasizing Dean's electability problem. Jordan, for instance, refers to Dean as a "small-town physician" from an "extremely small, homogenous state."

This leads to the final part of Kerry's strategy: containing Dean as the candidate of the liberal fringe. Jordan argues, "The data that's emerging shows very, very clearly that our largest structural advantage is that Senator Kerry is drawing support across the ideological and economic spectrum that's unlike every other candidate. Dean is drawing his support almost entirely from the left wing of the party. [Dick] Gephardt is drawing his support almost entirely from downscale and blue-collar voters." If this is true—and a pair of recent Zogby polls of New Hampshire and Iowa voters supports the thesis—it's significant, because the current conventional wisdom is that Dean and Kerry are fighting over the same small group of elite, liberal voters with neither of them expanding outside that base. "That's empirically not true," Jordan insists.

THE ASSUMPTION THAT it *is* true is driving the strategies of all the other campaigns, however. None of the other candidates seem frightened by Kerry's and Dean's top-tier statuses as long as both men are fighting to win over the left-liberal wing of the party. "They are vying over the same votes," says an aide to a rival campaign. "We're going to send them two left-handed boxing gloves." "Dean and Kerry appeal to the same demographics," says a top Gephardt adviser, "white, well-educated, eastern, liberal voters—NPR listeners, Volvo drivers."

Gephardt, Edwards, Lieberman, and Bob Graham are all betting that eventually one of them will emerge as the alternative to the winner of the Dean/Kerry battle. Gephardt

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aides think he's well-positioned to be that man. They note that Lieberman, Edwards, and Graham have yet to gain much traction and that Kerry, who had previously set his sights on beating Gephardt in Iowa, now must worry about not coming in third behind Dean. "What's shaping up is Dean and Kerry are about to go at it," says a Gephardt aide. "It's going to come down to one of them and Gephardt."

That argument was more persuasive before this week's news that Gephardt had missed his second-quarter fund-raising goal by $1 million, placing him in fifth place in the fund-raising chase for the year. Gephardt has also gotten a little nervous about holding onto his labor base in Iowa, with Dean and Kerry both bashing free-trade agreements in their stump speeches and even anti-free-trade firebrand Dennis Kucinich showing signs of life. In Iowa last week, Gephardt went out of his way to attack Kerry and Dean on trade. "Part of what Gephardt was doing was protecting our base," says an adviser.

The person with perhaps the greatest potential to emerge as the centrist challenger to Dean or Kerry, once the primaries move south and west after New Hampshire, is Edwards. But, though he has amassed an impressive $8 million war chest, the North Carolina senator is still registering in single digits in all the early caucus and primary states—including South Carolina—and continues to be burdened by the decision about whether to abandon the race for his Senate seat. The Edwards camp plausibly argues that they spent the first six months raising money and are only now sending their candidate out aggressively to meet voters in Iowa and New Hampshire. If the candidates were stocks, Edwards might be the most undervalued in the race and the best buy of the next quarter.

By contrast, the Lieberman campaign's argument that their man could be the one to stop a post–New Hampshire Dean insurgency ran into a major obstacle this week. While the inside-the-Beltway chatter focused on a staff shake-up and a meager bank account, a potentially far bigger problem is the rift opening between Lieberman and black leaders. The Connecticut senator got roughed up by the Congressional Black Caucus on July 9 for his stand on issues ranging from his response to the 2000 recount to his failure to strongly support a U.S. intervention in Liberia, and he was denounced by the NAACP's Kweisi Mfume for skipping the organization's July 14 forum. Black voters are a cornerstone of the coalition Lieberman is trying to forge, and, in one week, he seems to have alienated many of the most influential black leaders in the country.

Still, like the others, the Lieberman campaign seems to relish Dean's rise, seeing it as a vehicle to take down Kerry and then position their man as the mature, electable alternative who can actually beat Bush. In fact, it seems that all the candidates have an argument for why Dean's success is good for them. And what does the Dean camp think of all this? "I don't know which one of them it's good for," campaign manager Joe Trippi says with a chuckle. "I know it's good for us." ■

Howard Dean and the tempting of the Democrats.

Bitter Pill

BY JONATHAN CHAIT

Presumably, Karl Rove had no reason to believe his views would wind up in the press when he attended a Washington, D.C., Fourth of July parade as a spectator earlier this month. But, as a dozen supporters of Vermont Governor Howard Dean marched by, an environmental consultant named Daniel J. Weiss happened to overhear what Rove told a companion and relayed the powerful Bush adviser's commentary to *The Washington Post*. According to Weiss, Rove said, "Heh, heh, heh. Yeah, that's the one we want," and then cheered on the Dean marchers: "Come on, everybody! Go, Howard Dean!"

Rove is not the only Bush loyalist cackling with joy at Dean's rise from long-shot to spoiler to top-tier candidate. In recent weeks, *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page, *The Weekly Standard*, and *National Review Online*—none of which have the best interests of the Democratic Party at heart—have all published articles gloating over the prospects of a Dean candidacy. ("Bring on Deano," urged a piece by the *Standard*'s Fred Barnes.) Of course, the collective political judgment of the conservative movement is not infallible. There may even be times when Rove himself misjudges President Bush's political interest. This, however, is not one of those times.

The glee Dean inspires among Republicans is exceeded only by that of his supporters. He has attracted a cultlike following, similar to that of John McCain or Ross Perot, although it is largely confined to liberals. Dean is soaring mainly because he has tapped into the intense anger Democrats feel toward Bush. But, in this case, anger has gotten the better of reason. Democrats' justified desperation to unseat Bush may, paradoxically, render them less able to do so. The trouble is not Dean himself (he is a decent man) nor even necessarily how he might govern (more responsibly than some would think). It's that he has come to represent a

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Dean is on message.
But his message will wreck the Democrats.

political delusion: that on every issue Democrats have a moral and strategic obligation to oppose Bush diametrically. This delusion could enfeeble the Democratic Party in 2004, whether or not it makes Dean its nominee.

The heart of Dean's appeal is his audacious claim that he, alone, has the guts to criticize Bush. "I think that, for too long, Democrats have been afraid to take on the president," he told National Public Radio in March. "The only hope Democrats have to beat this president," he told a Los Angeles rally earlier this month, "is to behave like Democrats and stand up for what we believe." Liberals not only find this talk cathartic, they believe it holds the key to victory. As actor Alec Baldwin told a *Newsweek* reporter, "I want to know who's the person who's going to *take it to* Bush. We've got to get rid of this guy."

The fallacy underlying Dean's argument is that Democrats in Washington have gone along with Bush's policies rather than resist them. "We are not going to beat George Bush by voting with the president eighty-five percent of the time," he likes to say. Dean seems to be implying that his opponents supported Bush that often, but actually Kerry, Edwards, and Lieberman all had presidential support rates in the sixties and seventies. And even that dramatically overstates their agreement, since many of those votes—say, election reform or defense reauthorization—were, properly, uncontroversial. Most congressional Democrats have held fast in opposition to Bush's conservative agenda. On post-Enron reforms, the patients' bill of rights, campaign finance reform, homeland security spending, judicial nominations, oil-drilling in Alaska, and other issues, they have formed a fairly unified bloc. Most of the time, though, Republicans have rolled right over Democratic opposition. That's the way things tend to go when one party controls the presidency and both houses of Congress.

Why, then, do so many Democrats believe their party has acceded to Bush's policies? The main reason is that, in addition to lacking power, Democrats lack an effective way to disseminate their ideas. As Michael Crowley described recently in these pages ("Oppressed Minority," June 23), Democrats in the House are often unable even to bring their own alternative legislation up for a vote. In the Senate, they face a Republican majority only slightly less disciplined. The fact that Democrats wield so little power means the media has little reason to pay attention to their ideas. A proposal by the president or the majority leader of the House or Senate is, by definition, newsworthy. A proposal by a minority leader in Congress, setting out a position that has no chance of being enacted into law, is not. In press conferences throughout 2001 and 2002, Tom Daschle and Dick Gephardt fiercely denounced Bush's domestic agenda on a near-daily basis and proposed alternative policies. But few people are in the habit of obtaining press-conference transcripts, so almost nobody knew the Democrats even *had* an alternative agenda.

Why didn't Republicans have this problem when they were in the minority in Congress? For one thing, they had the megaphone of the White House for 19 of the 25 years preceding their takeover of Congress in 1995. For another, they built a network of journalists and radio entertainers to spread their message to the conservative faithful. During the Clinton years, Democratic control of the presidency offset this GOP advantage. Now, with Republicans occupying the bully pulpit, Democrats lack any such method of communicating with their base. The result, as pollster Charlie Cook has written in *National Journal*, is "a strong vein of disillusionment with the current leadership and direction of the Democratic Party." Dean likes to point out that "Democrats are almost as angry at the Democratic Party as they are at the Republican Party." And he has turned that anger against his primary foes, whom he derides as "Bush lite."

AT THE OUTSET of his campaign, Dean cited several areas where he felt Democrats were failing to challenge Bush sufficiently. The first was health care, where Democrats proposed tinkering with the system—say, by adding prescription drugs to Medicare—rather than sweeping reform. "What I want to know," Dean asked at the Democratic National Committee winter meeting, "is why we're fighting in Congress about the patients' bill of rights when the Democratic Party ought to be standing up for health care for every single American man, woman, and child in this country." It's hardly surprising, though, that Democrats in Congress would focus on small, achievable efforts rather than a grand, alternative agenda that has no chance of passing under a Republican president. Since they began fleshing out their presidential campaigns, some of Dean's fellow candidates have since developed far-reaching health plans. John Kerry's, for example, is very similar to Dean's; Dick Gephardt's is considerably larger and more ambitious.

Second, Dean says Democrats have acquiesced in Bush's radical tax-cutting or, at best, merely presented a paler version thereof. "What I want to know is what in the world so many Democrats are doing supporting tax cuts," he often says. There is a grain of truth here. Nearly all congressional

JUSTIN SULLIVAN/NEWSCOM

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Democrats supported small, temporary tax cuts targeted at the middle class and poor. Economically, this made good Keynesian sense: Such cuts would give a short-term jolt to the economy yet, due to their temporary nature, wouldn't create huge long-term deficits. Politically, it was smart as well, because it allowed Democrats to co-opt the popular elements of Bush's plan—giving middle-class workers a tax cut during a recession—while opposing the giant, regressive long-term tax cut that came along with it.

But, if Dean thinks a temporary, progressive tax cut during a recession is a bad idea, he hasn't explained why. Rather, he has gone out of his way to make audiences believe that most Democrats supported some slightly weaker version of the Bush tax cuts, which is not true. Yes, a few unprincipled or short-sighted Democrats—this means you, John Breaux and Max Baucus—decided a tax cut was going to happen regardless and wanted credit for helping dish out the goodies. Because the Senate is so closely split, even a couple of Democratic defections ensured that substantial tax cuts would pass. This put the rest of the party in the uncomfortable position of having to support bad tax cuts in order to hold the center against even worse ones. For example, Dean attacks Senators Kerry, John Edwards, and Joe Lieberman for supporting a $350 billion tax cut earlier this year. But these votes took place after a majority of the Senate had already decided to cut taxes by *at least* $350 billion. To vote against the $350 billion tax cut was to vote *for* the larger, $726 billion tax cut Bush had initially proposed.

It's true that, leading up to the 2002 elections, Democratic leaders in Congress refrained from advocating a repeal of the Bush tax cuts in deference to their colleagues in conservative swing districts. (In a 2002 Gallup poll, two-thirds of respondents opposed postponing, let alone repealing, the tax cut.) But, again, all of Dean's opponents have since called for repealing either all the Bush tax cuts or at least the largest and most regressive portions.

THE PRIMARY DISTINCTION between Dean and his competitors is Dean's opposition to the war against Iraq. And, here, Dean is factually correct: His most prominent opponents either supported the war outright (Edwards, Gephardt, Lieberman) or equivocated (Kerry). Where Dean goes wrong is in suggesting that his antiwar position will help him beat President Bush. In truth, it's a massive liability.

Dean and his supporters simply fail to face up to the unpleasant fact that the Democratic Party has a national security credibility problem that, if not solved, will be politically fatal. Since at least Vietnam, the public has consistently trusted Republicans more on defense. If Al Gore had happened to be president on September 11, 2001, and therefore benefited from the national desire to see the president as a strong leader, then perhaps the gap would have narrowed. But Bush was president, and the upsurge he enjoyed has made the security gap larger and more salient than ever. When asked which party can better defend against terrorism, the public consistently gives the GOP an enormous edge. If Democrats cannot whittle away at this gap, they face an insuperable obstacle to winning the presidency, however unpopular or unsuccessful Bush's domestic policies may be.

Dean points out that his opposition to war in Iraq does not mean he opposes the use of force in all instances. This, however, would be unlikely to help him in the general election. The main problem for Dean is not that the public is so supportive of the war in Iraq *specifically* but, rather, that it abhors any politician who smacks of weakness against foreign enemies *generally*. Even in the unlikely event that most voters conclude the Iraq war was a mistake, the broader resonance of Dean's antiwar position will still hurt him. As my colleague Lawrence F. Kaplan pointed out in a recent *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, the unpopularity of the Vietnam War hardly made George McGovern's dovishness more politically successful.

This isn't to say Democrats can't attack Bush's foreign policy, only that they must do so from a standpoint of toughness. Several Democrats, for example, have criticized Bush's failure to plan for occupying and rebuilding Iraq. Edwards and Lieberman have attacked Bush's refusal to provide adequate funding for homeland security. Dean's critique, however, is decidedly dovish. In a foreign policy speech last month, he called on the United States to "lead by example, not by force." In April, he said, "We've gotten rid of [Saddam Hussein], and I suppose that's a good thing." And, in an April op-ed, he criticized the administration for "imposing our will on sovereign nations." While concern for other nations' sovereignty certainly matters, in an era of acute national security fears it is exactly what most Americans *don't* want their president to be overly concerned about. Kerry, by contrast, has in at least one instance attacked Bush for violating another country's sovereignty insufficiently, decrying the administration's failure to use ground troops at Tora Bora in Afghanistan, which enabled Osama bin Laden to escape.

Nearly as problematic is Dean's implacable opposition to the Patriot Act. Dean regularly attacks his opponents for having supported the anti-terrorist measure opposed by many civil libertarians. Unsurprisingly, Dean again glosses over the political nuances—in this case, that congressional critics managed to weaken the bill, not least by including sunset provisions. Combined with his antiwar stance, Dean's opposition to the Patriot Act could be politically lethal in a general election. For years, Republicans painted Democrats as civil-libertarian purists unconcerned with fighting crime. (Witness George H. W. Bush's 1988 attack on Michael Dukakis as a "card-carrying member of the American Civil Liberties Union.") Crime may not have much political salience today, but terrorism certainly does. Whatever the merits of Dean's absolutist position, from a pragmatic standpoint he is once again walking into a GOP attack ad while flaying his opponents for failing to do the same.

Dean and his supporters portray his embrace of unpopu-

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lar positions as a political virtue. "The only way to beat this president is to stand up to him and stop being afraid of him and stop focusing your position base on polls and focus groups and things like that," Dean told *The New York Times* last week. Candidates ranging from Barry Goldwater to Jerry Brown have made some version of this argument, and it remains an article of faith among activists on the right and left. Its appeal lies in its irresistible hope that philosophical ideals need never be tainted by pragmatic compromise. But it requires a willful blindness to political history. For instance, if it's true that a Democratic candidate can win merely by standing firm for his principles and exciting the faithful, then it ought to be true of Republican candidates as well. As Dean's campaign manager, Joe Trippi, argued on a pro-Dean Web log, "Victory for the Republicans requires nothing more than an energized base—and that is all Bush and Rove are doing every day. Every move they make is aimed at one thing—energizng [sic] their base—and nothing more."

That's nonsense. Even a casual reading of Bush's presidency makes clear that, from the beginning, he has compromised conservative purity in order to court swing votes. His compromises range from the purely symbolic (calling himself a "compassionate conservative") to the largely symbolic (agreeing to spend slightly more money on education) to the substantive (imposing steel tariffs and agreeing to a Medicare prescription-drug benefit). If there were a Dean in the GOP right now, he would be attacking Bush as "Daschle lite" and telling the party faithful that the best way for the president to be reelected would be to oppose prescription-drug benefits and angrily denounce the Supreme Court's rulings on sodomy and affirmative action.

When they're not arguing that only Dean is liberal enough to energize the Democratic base, his backers insist he's actually not that liberal. There is some truth to this. He supported the death penalty and likes to tout his "A" rating from the National Rifle Association. "Get the gun issue off the table," he said at a political rally last year. "It cost Al Gore three states—and the presidency." (Whether or not this is true, it's unclear why Dean finds it morally and strategically acceptable to co-opt a popular GOP position on gun control but not on going to war with Iraq.)

The remaining evidence of Dean's ability to capture the political center is pretty flimsy. Some have noted that he often disappointed liberals as governor of Vermont. But, needless to say, the threshold of ideological moderation required to disappoint Vermont liberals is quite low. As Peter Beinart noted in these pages ("The Big Debate," March 16, 1998), Texas conservatives, who reside about as far from the national center as Vermont liberals, frequently opposed Bush during his governorship—a testament to their off-the-charts radicalism, not his centrism. Dean also likes to present his oft-professed support for balanced budgets as a sign of ideological heterodoxy. It's true that Dean governed Vermont as a true fiscal tightwad. He seems to forget that Walter Mondale advocated tax increases and spending cuts to reduce the deficit before losing a landslide race in 1984. That Dean is willing to do the same suggests admirable courage. But it hardly speaks to his electability.

Dean's heterodoxy on guns and the death penalty would not help him in a general-election race because most voters don't carefully examine each candidate's individual positions. Instead, they take a broad measure of the man. And Dean has already defined himself as the spokesman for the left wing of the Democratic Party. His supporters may thrill to the fact that he openly calls himself a "social liberal," but there's a reason so few politicians embrace that term: Only 17 percent of Americans identify themselves as liberal, as opposed to 40 percent moderate and 35 percent conservative. And, having publicly branded himself a liberal, Dean can't later recast himself as a moderate without being ridiculed for, well, recasting himself as a moderate.

Dean enthusiasts believe their candidate can transcend these obstacles through the force of his blunt-speaking personality, which they compare to that of McCain. Yet Dean's appeal remains socioeconomically confined. His self-described combination of fiscal conservatism and social liberalism inspires the educated elite—who have been gravitating toward the Democratic Party—but holds little sway among blue-collar and rural voters who have slipped toward the GOP. A recent New Hampshire poll showed Dean winning 77 percent approval from likely primary voters with postgraduate degrees but less than 50 percent approval from those without college degrees. Rural and working-class voters have warmed to Bush because they believe he shares their values—an important element of which is his notion of evil, which can be defeated only through force, whether or not the rest of the world approves. Dean's pompous demeanor, outspoken social liberalism, and antiwar stance would render him helpless against the cultural populism Bush uses so effectively.

One of the most difficult tasks parties face is convincing their activist bases to compromise in order to win. Even some of his critics have credited Dean with generating enthusiasm among the rank and file, but it's a negative kind of enthusiasm. When Dean says Democrats are angrier at their own party than they are at the GOP, he's identifying a severe political liability—one that he's aggravating. If Dean does not win the nomination, he will have nurtured that sense of grievance among the Democratic base. Many Dean supporters deeply opposed the war in Iraq and much of Bush's anti-terror agenda, and they feel that the Democratic nominee has a moral obligation to mount a full-throated opposition from the left regardless of the consequences. That is their right. But they're fooling themselves if they think doing so will be anything other than a political disaster.

The eventual nominee, if not Dean, will have to reconcile with a liberal base whose expectations the former Vermont governor has raised. If the eventual nominee tries to woo the political center, he will therefore depress the base. One

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short-term outcome of such a schism was suggested by Ralph Nader, who, according to *The New York Times*, said the nomination of Dean (or ultra-lefty Dennis Kucinich) would make him less likely to mount another third-party challenge. The obvious corollary is that, if another candidate wins the Democratic nomination, Nader will cite this as a rationale for his candidacy. Dean has said he will endorse whomever ultimately wins the primary. But his attacks upon the Democratic mainstream (particularly his view of political compromise as a kind of character flaw) will make his supporters all the more amenable to the liberal purity of another spoiler campaign by Nader. As one Dean loyalist wrote on the unofficial Dean Web log, "Democratic voters are being driven to the Green Party by DLC [Democratic Leadership Council] Republicrats."

The eventual nominee's other option would be to move left to placate liberals energized by Dean. Kerry—who doesn't exactly have electability to spare—has already begun to emulate Dean by declaring his "anger" at Bush despite a widespread view that general-election voters prefer optimistic candidates over irate ones. If Dean wins a strong following in the primaries, Democrats may have to give opponents of the war prime speaking time at the 2004 convention and influence over the platform and vice-presidential nominee. Dukakis had to give Jesse Jackson this sort of deference in 1988, helping define him as unacceptably liberal to many voters. Dean may lose the nomination, but, unless he loses badly, the damage he inflicts will endure.

Indeed, while Dean's personal style apes McCain, his candidacy structurally resembles that of another insurgent: Steve Forbes. Both Forbes and Dean were the opposition party's ideal nominee. (The GOP equivalent of an antiwar liberal from Vermont is a right-wing millionaire from horse country.) Forbes, like Dean, took advantage of his outside-Washington status to batter more electable opponents for their inevitable compromises. (GOP nominee Bob Dole blamed his 1996 general-election defeat on the pounding he endured from Forbes in the primaries.) Like the Forbes campaign, the primary effect of Dean's insurgent run will be to make it harder for his party's eventual nominee to adopt a broadly popular platform without disappointing the activist base. And, without doing that, no Democrat can deny George W. Bush another—potentially catastrophic—four years. No wonder Karl Rove is chortling. ■

Why the critics still don't get Howard Dean.

Good Doctor

BY JONATHAN COHN

When the history of this presidential campaign is written, one of the best chapters will be about how Howard Dean beat Tim Russert. It was roughly a month ago that Dean appeared as Russert's guest on NBC's "Meet the Press," and, by the time Dean was through absorbing Russert's jabs, he looked decidedly less than presidential. When asked about the balanced-budget amendment and the bipartisan proposal for Medicare drug coverage, Dean seemed to waffle. When asked to name the number of troops serving in the active military, Dean could muster only a vague guess. When Dean suggested his proposal to repeal the Bush tax cuts would leave people better off, Russert challenged that assertion with figures suggesting otherwise. Although Dean's answers were better than Russert would admit—Russert's tax figures were misleading, among other things—Dean's unsteady delivery and body language suggested a man out of his league, prompting the press (myself included) to pan the appearance. An editorial in *The Washington Post* said Dean's performance "was, to put it charitably, less than impressive." On CNBC's "Hardball," Mike Barnicle described for viewers "the sound and the sight of a man crashing his candidacy into a bridge abutment," while, the on Fox News Channel, *Fortune*'s Jeff Birnbaum rendered an even more unequivocal verdict: "Dean's star has risen and fallen."

It seemed like a reasonable bet, particularly given what happened to the last Democratic candidate who stumbled so badly through a Russert interview. Prior to his own "Meet the Press" appearance a year ago, Senator John Edwards had been the Democratic Party's golden boy, with insiders swooning over his smarts, political talent, and Southern pedigree. But, after Edwards spent an interview evading questions and groping to articulate his own positions, pundits and party elders dumped all over him, with Bill Clinton reportedly advising him to bone up on policy before going public again. His campaign still has not fully recovered; even now, despite having raised gobs of money from his trial-lawyer friends, his poll numbers in key states remain mired in single digits.

But Dean's candidacy took a very different turn after his "Meet the Press" debacle. While the other Democratic candidates had spent the last few months auditioning for party elites, Dean had been busy auditioning for actual voters—and winning them over. He had amassed an army of supporters, thousands strong, who frankly didn't care what

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Dean doesn't just appeal to lefties.

Russert thought. Donations to Dean's website actually increased after the show, and, on the very next Tuesday, more than 30,000 people participated in Dean's formal announcement ceremony—most of them scattered across the country in simultaneous meetings arranged via the Internet. A few days later, Dean stunned the political universe by announcing he had already raised more than $6 million during the second quarter of 2003, more than any other candidate. That produced yet another spike in donations—this time, an astonishing $800,000 in one day.

While this feat won Dean the respect of his critics—a few reporters even started calling him the front-runner—it hardly silenced them. If anything, they grew more hysterical about where Dean's left-wing, antiwar candidacy might take the party. "If somebody doesn't stop Howard Dean," warned pollster and columnist Dick Morris, "he and his ideas will be permanent plagues on the Democratic Party." Even those more sympathetic to Dean's beliefs expressed serious qualms, convinced he could never beat President Bush in the general election. "If the Democrats nominate him as their presidential candidate," my colleague John B. Judis wrote recently on Salon.com, "he is almost sure to lose to George W. Bush, and perhaps by a very large margin."

But Dean's critics are either misrepresenting his positions, underestimating his skill as a campaigner, or both. Dean is no left-wing radical, and, while his competition has made little headway with the public—nearly every other major candidate's support has stagnated or fallen in the last year—Dean has gone from obscurity to the top tier. This is testimony to his considerable potential as a candidate and, when coupled with his governing record, suggestive of his abilities as a potential president. It's far too early to say whether Dean is the best in the Democratic field. But it's also too early to say he isn't.

THE LEAST CONVINCING of the Dean critiques is also the most common: that he is a liberal extremist pandering to left-wing activists and leading the party toward electoral disaster. This critique, muttered frequently by Dean's opponents, took off when the centrist Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) issued a blistering memo in May describing Dean and his supporters as "the McGovern-Mondale wing, defined principally by weakness abroad and elitist, interest-group liberalism at home. That's the wing that lost 49 states in two elections, and transformed Democrats from a strong national party into a much weaker regional one."

But there's a problem with this description: It directly contradicts Dean's record as a moderate, fiscally disciplined governor. Vermont alone among the states has no constitutional requirement for balanced budgets—a situation the state's liberals had exploited, running up huge deficits by the time Dean took over. But Dean emphatically insisted on reducing those deficits until the budget was balanced. When that was done, he paid down debt and salted money away in a rainy-day fund, thereby insulating the state from the kind of draconian budget cuts the rest of the nation is enduring these days. And that wasn't the only way he annoyed Vermont liberals: In an effort to boost the state's economy, Dean sought partnerships with business leaders, earning high marks even from conservatives but putting off some environmentalists who thought his policies allowed too much sprawl. As Jan Backus, a former Democratic state senator, recently told the *Los Angeles Times*, "He kind of acted as a brake on the Democrats in the Legislature that were more to the left of him." The DLC knew this as well as anyone: In 1996, they hailed the reelection of "centrist Governor Howard Dean" as evidence "of Democratic resurgence under New Democratic leadership."

Typically, elected officials running for president become less courageous once they start hunting for votes among the party faithful. But the remarkable thing about Dean is the extent to which he has stood by his centrist convictions as a candidate, frequently to his own political detriment. As *The Weekly Standard*, among other publications, has observed, Dean routinely warns audiences comprising teachers that he favors state flexibility—which the unions hate—over strict federal guidelines when it comes to education spending. Likewise, Dean refuses to rule out raising the retirement age in order to shore up Social Security's finances, a stance that opponents Dick Gephardt and John Kerry will almost certainly exploit as they hunt for liberal supporters of their own. Dean is so committed to fiscal discipline, in fact, that he refused to propose more than $90 billion per year in his plan for nearly universal health care. As Dean recently told a New Hampshire gathering, recounted in the Manchester *Union-Leader*, that means the plan "is not a Cadillac. ... We can't afford a Cadillac. But it covers everybody at a reasonable price." With Gephardt offering a more generous—if expensive—plan, such an approach could cost Dean the support of the all-important service

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unions, for whom health care is the top priority.

So, if Dean isn't really so liberal, why do so many liberals love him? A big reason is that he seems as angry as they are—not just at President Bush but at the Democratic Party's leadership for meekly going along. Dean does have a habit of going too far—such as the time he criticized Edwards for fudging his stance on the war when Edwards had actually made his position absolutely clear—to the point that his apologies have become as predictable as his outbursts. But, in the larger, substantive sense, Dean's attacks on the party and his rivals are absolutely right: The Democratic leadership and presidential candidates *have* been timid. While all the Democrats running for president voted against the Bush tax cuts, most supported less expensive alternatives. And it wasn't until the last few months that any of them began calling for repealing the tax cuts already in place. Dean, by contrast, condemned the compromises—and called for their repeal—almost as soon as they passed.

It's this willingness to stake out a few iconoclastic positions—standing up for his more progressive views with the same determination he defends his more centrist positions—that makes liberals believe in Dean even though other candidates, such as Gephardt or Kerry, may promise them more. And, once again, it's a trait consistent with Dean's career as governor. When Dean's attempt to enact a small-scale version of the Clinton health care plan failed in 1994, he didn't give up on the issue the way the Democratic leadership in Washington did. He hammered away at it, pushing to cover more and more kids through incremental reforms—and then protecting those funds even when budgets were tight and he had to trim spending elsewhere. On the most controversial issue of his tenure, gay civil unions, Dean didn't go looking for the fight. But, when the state supreme court forced the issue by insisting that the state find a way to recognize the rights of gays, Dean announced that he would sign a civil-unions bill—a promise he fulfilled, even though it nearly cost him his political career. As Peter Shumlin, a Democratic state senator, told me last year, "[Dean] looked at us and said, 'This is the right thing to do.' ... And he knew the consequences. He knew there would be political fallout, that people would lose their jobs over it; but he knew it was the right thing to do for civil rights."

IF THIS WERE a normal election year, Dean's candidacy wouldn't be nearly so controversial. But, across the ideological spectrum of Democrats, the desire to oust Bush far outweighs the desire to elect a candidate who conforms to any particular person's idea of good policies or good character. That's why even would-be supporters are skittish about Dean: "I really appreciate that Howard Dean is pushing the envelope, and he's pushing the Democratic Party hard," one New Hampshire voter recently told *The Washington Post*'s Dan Balz. But "I can't afford to be led only by my heart. I've got to be practical." And, while Dean clearly believes his centrist record and straight talk can win over skeptical moderates, party leaders such as DLC President (and TNR contributor) Bruce Reed say it's simply too late for such recasting. "Dean's about to discover the lesson that has doomed so many Democrats in the past: Once you've abandoned the center, it's hard to get back there."

But how hard will it really be? One survey in New Hampshire actually shows Dean polling better among independents, and worse among Democrats, than his chief rival there, Kerry. And, just this Tuesday, it was members of the congressional Blue Dog Coalition—a group of conservative, mostly Southern Democrats—who were talking up Dean's potential after a meeting with him on Capitol Hill. "It's obvious that he's a fiscal conservative," Indiana Representative Baron Hill told MSNBC's Tom Curry. "When you talk about the gun issue, he's a social conservative. When you're talking about gay rights and that sort of thing, he's not. But ... he's making some inroads, and he was impressive."

Dwelling on Dean's political liabilities tends to obscure another important consideration—his considerable political assets, starting with his unique ability to eliminate, or at least mitigate, President Bush's huge fund-raising advantages. Under the old campaign finance system, Democrats largely ignored mass fund-raising, figuring the best way to stay competitive was to concentrate on large donations from wealthy financiers. Since those donations are now illegal—thanks to the McCain-Feingold campaign reforms—Democrats will need to rediscover mass fund-raising just to stay remotely competitive. Dean, of course, is the only candidate doing that already. And it's easy to see how he could parlay the contributions he has received from his existing donor base into much more money. Because he's drawing from many donors—some 80,000 at last count—each giving small amounts of money well below the legal threshold for individual donations, he's free to approach them again for more during the primaries or the general election. (This also means Dean will have an easier time getting federal matching funds, since the federal government matches individual donations but only up to $250 per person.) It's hard to imagine any of the other Democrats inspiring such grassroots devotion.

Then there is the fact that Dean—alone among the declared contenders—talks like a human being. Dean's five major rivals are lawyers by training; Dean is a doctor, and it shows. "He speaks in short sentences," says Simon Rosenberg, president of the New Democrat Network. "He's passionate. You know where he stands pretty quickly, and it's very refreshing to people." Sometimes this gets Dean into trouble, since he blurts out statements (such as the comment that he "suppose[d]" the Iraqi people were better off without Saddam Hussein) that he ends up taking back. But, more often, it strengthens one of Dean's primary claims: that he is an outsider who can shake up Washington, a line that is as effective as it is clichéd. Just ask the current Oval Office occupant, who in 2000 constantly remind-

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ed voters that "I'm coming from outside Washington, and I'm the challenger candidate," or the man who preceded him, who in 1992 liked to tell audiences that "if I tried to run the government in my home state the way they do it in Washington, ... we'd be in a terrible fix." (Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan ran as outsiders, too; indeed, the only successful candidate in recent memory who didn't was Bush's father, George H.W. Bush.)

None of this will matter, however, if Dean can't get past what many assume to be his biggest political liability: his opposition to the war. More than at any time in recent memory, voters will quite properly demand that presidential candidates demonstrate their ability to protect national security. That's a difficult challenge for any governor lacking foreign policy or personal military experience. Make that governor a New Englander, load him up with a few cultural positions (such as pro-civil unions) that some voters interpret as "soft," then have him oppose a war that was widely popular at the time, and what you have—it would seem—is a recipe for disaster.

No Democrat with a knowledge of U.S. history should take this prospect lightly. Republicans convinced Americans that Michael Dukakis was unpatriotic just because he supported civil liberties—much as Dean now opposes the Patriot Act—and beat him resoundingly. The war George McGovern ran against was highly unpopular, yet Republicans painted him as weak and defeated him in all but one state. "We need a candidate who is credible on national security," Representative Martin Frost, a centrist Democrat from Texas, said in May. "I think Howard Dean has the appearance of being another McGovern." But that comparison overlooks one key point: The country isn't in the middle of a culture war like it was in the early '70s. A vote for McGovern back then wasn't simply a vote against the war in Vietnam. It was a vote for long hair, and drugs, and Janis Joplin, and all the other things that so offended middle-class moral sensibilities. Voting for Dean today would carry no such baggage, particularly since Dean actually opposes some of the Democrats' more extreme cultural stances (such as legalizing marijuana) while boasting a pretty conservative record on crime (favoring capital punishment in certain cases).

Remember, too, that Dean is hardly the peacenik some critics (and, admittedly, some of his supporters) assume. He has pledged to send more troops into Afghanistan and Iraq; when it comes to Liberia, he's more hawkish than Joe Lieberman. Nor is Dean fundamentally suspicious of U.S. power: He says he supported every formal U.S. military action since Vietnam—including the first Gulf war—and he has said explicitly that he supports attacking a country that presents an imminent threat, as was the case in Afghanistan under the Taliban.

Dean is also well-positioned—ideally positioned, in fact—to take political advantage of the revelations about the administration's mishandling of intelligence on Saddam's nuclear program (or lack thereof) and the failure to find chemical or biological weapons in Iraq. Most of Dean's rivals find themselves in the uncomfortable position of having to explain why they thought the weapons threat was real. So far, the best defense is the "I-was-duped" line—which doesn't exactly suggest strong leadership skills. (It's particularly damning in the case of Edwards, who sits on the Intelligence Committee, since his rival and fellow committee member, Bob Graham, joined Dean in panning the weapons-of-mass-destruction argument before the war even started.) Characteristically, Dean hasn't shied away from making this point: "If I as governor of Vermont can figure out the case is not there to invade Iraq, how can three senators and a congressman ... manage to give the president unilateral authority to attack Iraq? It looks like my analysis was the correct one, and theirs was the incorrect one. It's going to be hard for them to make the case that I don't have the credentials on foreign policy after this."

This aggressive self-promotion isn't always Dean's most attractive quality. But the attitude behind it—combined with his well-deserved reputation for defending even his unpopular positions strongly—could be Dean's best weapon against doubts about his national security qualifications. Voters want a president who will be tough on national security, but, as feelings about the Iraq war grow more ambivalent, they're apt to make that judgment more on gut feeling than individual policy positions. And, while you can say a lot of bad things about Dean—that he's arrogant, stubborn, even mean-spirited on occasion—nobody who has heard or seen him could call him soft. Dean may have the intellect of a Yale-educated doctor, but he has the mentality of a Manhattan street-brawler. This week, for example, while the other candidates were hemming and hawing about "troubling" intelligence revelations, Dean called outright for administration officials who'd misled the president to resign. And, while Dean's rivals insist this attitude is a liability—"angry men don't typically win national political races," Kerry campaign adviser Jim Jordan has sniped—others see it as a source of strength. "Dean has done a very good job of positioning himself as a strong leader," says Rosenberg. "He's willing to take on a fight, he's willing to mix it up, and he's clearly willing to fight for what he believes in." Strange as it sounds, then, the same pugnacity that makes Dean a hero to doves might ultimately make him tolerable to hawks, too.

To be sure, convincing the voters you would make a good commander-in-chief isn't the same as *being* a good commander-in-chief. And, on this important question, we really haven't seen enough of Dean to know whether he would. But the former Vermont governor has certainly earned the right to prove he's up to the job. After all, he has spent his entire career—and most of the last few months—disproving those who underestimated him. There's no reason to believe he'll stop now. ■

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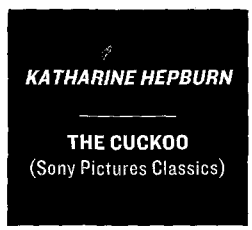
BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Exit the Queen

THE OBITUARIES FOR KATHarine Hepburn that I saw, in print and on television, were oddly gratifying. She was ninety-six, so there had been plenty of time to prepare those obits, and without being in the least eager, I had for a long time been curious about what they would say. In the event, they were in general pleasantly ecstatic. Hepburn had been in films for sixty-two years, longer than any other American female star. In tone and temper she was unique. At the start her individuality, her arched-neck air, had not always helped her. Early in her career *The New Yorker* ran a cartoon of two fillies in a pasture looking at another filly in the background. One of the two in front says to the other about the third, "Oh, there's no talking to her since someone told her that she looks like Katharine Hepburn."



But Hepburn triumphed over this sort of mockery, partly in a way that she herself might not have foreseen. Like Glenda Jackson and Emma Thompson, and unlike any other American actress, she made intelligence sexy. (Well, there were shades of it in Rosalind Russell and Irene Dunne.) Then, too, Hepburn's beauty was, like her temperament, unique. When Hollywood improved the way it dressed and coiffed and lighted her, her beauty became a revelation—startling rather than seductive.

But, as one who saw (almost) all her films as they came out, beginning with *A Bill of Divorcement* in 1932, I noted that the obituaries scanted a peculiar quality of her success, her triumph over matters that would have sunk another actress. First, her accent and voice. Despite the help of coaches along the road, she never really modified her upper-class New England accent, even when she was playing an Ozark native (*Spitfire*) or a Chinese villager (*Dragon Seed*). As for the voice itself, she was well able to maneuver through the general reaches of drama or comedy, but sometimes the high moments of a role left her flapping. Even in the obituary film clips, there were occasional stretches of six or eight seconds when, to put it candidly, she sounded like a duck quacking. I chuckled. Such sounds might have capsized a lesser career, but Hepburn almost flaunted them.

The negatives of her success reached their apex in the most demanding role she ever attempted on screen. (Her Shakespeare and Shaw on stage don't figure here.) She was diametrically miscast as Mary Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey Into Night.* New England Yankees were exactly the species that O'Neill slashed in that play and in *A Moon for the Misbegotten,* yet here his Irish-American Catholic protagonist was played by one of that hated species, a quintessential Yankee. In my view there were further reasons to criticize Hepburn's performance, but few questioned her very presence in the role.

Hepburn not only survived this miscasting, she advanced through it, because she was especially armored. She was, as far as an American can be, an aristocrat. Girl-next-door stars are plentiful, as are stars who have glamorized themselves by various assets. Hepburn was a born royal, and no one more dearly loves a lord—or a lady—than democrats, if that royal person can nourish private fantasies. (Remember Princess Di.) Her implicit lofty status protected her.

Still another aspect distinguished Hepburn. All film stars, male and female, can be divided into two groups. In one of those groups, the star's professional persona and private persona are quite distinct. What did we know or care about the private lives of, say, Joan Crawford or Betty Grable or Robert Taylor? But in the other group, the professional and the private personae merge and strongly color each other. John Wayne is a chief example. Some people thought he really was a war hero: a medal was discussed. Marilyn Monroe, as a person rather than as an actress, evoked book-length caroling from Norman Mailer. Hepburn is certainly in this second group. As the years went by, audiences felt more and more strongly that she was herself the person that she played in films. In the course of time playwrights and scenarists began to promote her personal characteristics in the roles they wrote for her. The outstanding instance is obviously the role that Philip Barry created for her in *The Philadelphia Story.* (Oddity: the woman was named Tracy Lord, and this was several years before Hepburn was linked with Spencer Tracy.) This blending is also apparent in many of her later films. So thorough is the mixture that in those television obituaries, where clips from her roles and from her interviews were interwoven, sometimes I mistook one for the other. When two stars of group two are together, like Hepburn and Wayne in *Rooster Cogburn,* the picture takes on the feeling of a home movie made by them for their own amusement.

The prime example of Hepburn's victory over the usual prescripts was her long affair with Spencer Tracy. In 1940 she began living with Tracy, a married man, and they were together (more or less) until his death in 1967. The relationship was too well known to be called an open secret, yet—as far as I can recall—puritanical outrage was virtually mute. During that very same period, when reports came along in 1950 about Ingrid Bergman and Roberto Rossellini (both married to others), this country steamed with fury. Some groups strove to boycott Bergman's pictures; sly jokes about the affair were current; tabloids yelped. But I can remember no such fuming about Hepburn and Tracy. It was as if the public thought Hepburn—and, to be sure, Tracy—incapable of indecencies. In

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fact, four years after Tracy's death Garson Kanin published a book called *Tracy and Hepburn* that was a best-seller. Many of the obituaries referred to the affair reverentially. Canted though it is, that reverence was, in America, a low bow.

I saw Hepburn on stage only once, in a musical about Coco Chanel. Many, many times in my life I have regretted after a performance that the theater is ephemeral, but this was not one of those times. Fortunately, most of her adorers know her only through her pictures. Her obituaries demonstrated a special blessing of film: it allowed Hepburn to soar over her shortcomings by the power of her self.

Descend now to mortals. **THE CUCKOO** is an allegorical drama, written and directed by Alexander Rogozhkin, a Russian, set in northern Finland in September 1944, a short time before Finland withdrew from its alliance with Hitler. A Finnish soldier is shackled to a rock by his fellows as punishment for lapses in martial spirit. Not far away, a Soviet captain is under punishment for his laxness about the war, and escapes in an accident. Both men, who have been enemies, are sheltered by a young Lapp widow who has a rough hut nearby on a place where she raises deer.

The three people speak three languages. (The Lapp language is called Sami.) There are difficulties of communication. These do not stop each of the men from eventually sleeping with the woman, at her invitation: still, misunderstandings and near murder do mar matters.

The message of the picture, which might have been made by the late tractarian Stanley Kramer had he been Russian, is clearer than clear. If all the people on earth could only understand one another, there would be no war. (The small matter of civil war is not touched.) And if we all only lived as simply as the Lapp woman does and nursed one another back to health with home remedies, paradise would be closer. The ending of the picture, ten or so years later, confirms the lesson in a way that I won't reveal, not to preserve the surprise but to avoid the risible.

Rogozhkin's hard, hands-on directing technique and the physicality of all three actors are—or could be—impressive, but they are swamped here in a sea of ideological mush. ■

Paula Fredriksen

Mad Mel

The Gospel according to Gibson.

MEL GIBSON'S NEWEST historical drama, on the death of Jesus Christ, is not anti-Semitic. So complete is his commitment to historical authenticity that he has eschewed subtitles, and will tell his story entirely in its original ancient languages, Aramaic and Latin. Gibson bankrolled the entirety of his forthcoming film, and he co-wrote the script; but the Holy Spirit directed it. "The Holy Ghost was working through me on this film," Gibson has recounted when asked about *The Passion*. "I was just directing traffic." Unfortunately, a group of Catholic and Jewish scholars, alert to Gibson's effort, engaged the services of a mole, ... illegally obtained a copy of the script, and then began to pressure Gibson to revise his story to conform to their own ideas about history and theology. Gibson's lawyers quashed their attempted extortion, however. The scholars withdrew their criticisms. And Mel's movie, in various private screenings, has already begun to move hearts and minds.

All the sentences above are culled from recent articles in assorted media—*The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, NewsMax.com,* Zenit, Religion News Service, the *New York Daily News,* Australia's *Sun-Herald.* Some of the statements are true. Gibson did co-write the script. His company, Icon, did produce it. His attorney did accuse critics of attempting extortion. And at least one viewer at a private screening in June, moved to tears and prayer, has called the film "a miracle." Whether the Holy Ghost helped out during the shoot I cannot say. All the other statements, I do know, are false.

I began worrying about Gibson's movie back in March, when *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* ran their stories. The piece in the *Journal* rhapsodized about Gibson's religious faith as well as about his ardent commitment to his vision: a graphic exploration of the suffering, the torture, and the death of Jesus. The script would draw not only on the Gospels, the article reported, but also on visions of Christ's Passion received and written up by two seventeenth-century nuns. Gibson, the *Journal* revealed, was struggling to recapture historical reality both visually (the gore, the pain) and aurally. Ancient languages, no subtitles: this was "a point of honor for Mr. Gibson." His reason was simple. "This is what was spoken at the time," he explained.

But something did not add up. To depict a first-century event by drawing on visionary writings composed almost two millennia later makes no sense at all: one might as well try to reconstruct ancient armor by peering at Bruegel. And while Aramaic was indeed the daily language of ancient Jews in Galilee and Judea, Latin would scarcely have figured at all. When the Jewish high priest and the Roman prefect spoke to each other, they would have used Greek, which was the English of antiquity. And Pilate's troops, employees of Rome, were not "Romans." They were Greek-speaking local gentiles on the imperial payroll. Gibson's pious evocations of historicity rang more than a little hollow. How much homework had he actually done?

Then *The New York Times Magazine* published a profile of Hutton Gibson, the actor's father. He is what modern Catholics politely term a "traditionalist." Hutton Gibson considers the current papacy to be illegitimate. Vatican II—the Roman Church council in 1965 that, inter alia, changed liturgical language from Latin to spoken vernaculars, and expressed as a theological point of principle that all Jews everywhere could not be held culpable for the death

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of Jesus—he dismisses as a coup pulled off by Freemasons and Jews. He is also given to idiosyncrasy about the Holocaust (he believes that it never happened) and about September 11 (he believes that Al Qaeda was not involved).

The father's views, the article properly noted, cannot simply be imputed to the son. But the *Times* also noted that the son has aired his own contempt for the Vatican, and has generously financed and very visibly endorsed assorted "traditionalist" endeavors. And now he is committed to making this graphically violent film called *The Passion.* In light of the historical connection between the charge of Christ-killing and Christian anti-Jewish violence, might the film upset Jews? "It may," Gibson conceded. "It's not meant to. It's meant just to tell the truth."

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE JEWISH to find anti-Semitism alarming and morally repulsive. Plenty of non-Jews—Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist—repudiate anti-Semitism and condemn it. But it is worth remembering that Catholics have an additional reason to combat anti-Semitism. It is that popes and bishops, in plenum councils, have issued official ("magisterial") teachings against it. Anti-Semitism violates magisterial instruction touching on biblical interpretation, on the theological significance of Christ's sacrifice, and on Catholic-Jewish relations.

And so, within two weeks of the appearance of these articles, Icon was contacted by Eugene Fisher, associate director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Fisher's counterpart at the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Eugene Korn, also weighed in. They assembled an ad hoc group of professors—four Catholics, two Jews, all scholars of the New Testament—to review the script together with Fisher and Korn, who themselves hold doctorates. Shortly thereafter, at their invitation, I also joined the group.

On March 25, the day before they invited me on board, Fisher and Korn exchanged communications with one William Fulco, S.J., who teaches in the department of classics and archaeology at Loyola Marymount University, a Jesuit institution in Los Angeles. He had served as Gibson's librettist, translating the script from English into Aramaic and Latin. His intimacy with the script was perhaps the reason that he assumed, or was assigned, his role; for as long as the dialogue lasted, Fulco was the main contact on the Icon side.

Fisher and Korn had faxed Fulco two documents on criteria for evaluating dramatizations of Jesus's Passion, one issued by the USCCB in 1988, the second produced jointly by the USCCB and the ADL in 2001. In response, Fulco thanked them, and assured both men that the script was devoid of any hint of anti-Jewishness. In fact, he claimed, it was "totally in accord with the [USCCB/ADL] documents." Fulco's struggles with the translation, he says in this e-mail, had engraved the script in his memory. ("I know [it] almost backwards.") Shooting had concluded, Fulco said, only the prior week. Fulco then added two points of information relevant to future events—that he was "preparing accurate subtitles" (what had happened to Gibson's "point of honor"?) and that "the film follows the script quite faithfully." (Since the reporter from *The Wall Street Journal* had mentioned seeing "a first look at a rough cut of the film," it must have been substantially assembled before March 7.)

A few weeks later, on April 14, Fisher wrote to the group of scholars and to another USCCB officer: "I have just received the good news that we will receive the script for our analysis and comment within the next couple of days." The scholars had to promise confidentiality: we could not circulate the script outside of our group, "though of course your comments can be public." On April 17, Fisher informed Fulco that he had received the script and had sent copies out to the scholars. We received them and read them over Easter weekend.

The whole group heard again from Fisher on April 25. "Gibson called me last night," Fisher began. "He had with him McEveety [another Icon producer] and Fulco." Gibson said that he wanted Fisher to convey to the scholars that he does not share his father's views, that some of his best friends are Jewish, that he is sensitive to anti-Semitism and opposed to it. "As an Irish Catholic Australian," wrote Fisher in his e-mail, Gibson "knows more than a bit about religious and social prejudice and [he] relates to Jews as fellow sufferers from it.... He's open to what we have to say, but still a bit cautious." At this point Fisher still thought that we could work with Gibson to try to improve his film.

We already knew that Gibson's efforts to be "as truthful as possible" (his own words in the *Times*) would be frustrated by the best sources that he had to draw on, namely, the Gospels themselves. Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, whose texts were composed in Greek between 70 C.E. and 100 C.E., differ significantly on matters of fact. In Mark, Jesus's last meal is a Passover seder; in John, Jesus is dead before the seder begins. Mark and Matthew feature two night "trials" before a full Jewish court, and a dramatic charge of "blasphemy" from the high priest. Luke has only a single trial, early in the morning, and no high priest. John lacks this Jewish trial scene entirely. The release of Barabbas is a "Roman custom" in Mark, a "Jewish custom" in John. Between the four evangelists, Jesus speaks three different last lines from the cross. And the resurrection stories vary even more.

The evangelists wrote some forty to seventy years after Jesus's execution. Their literary problems are compounded by historical ones: it is difficult to reconstruct, from their stories, why Jesus was crucified at all. If the priests in Jerusalem had wanted him dead, Jesus could have been privately murdered or killed offstage. If the priests had wanted him killed but were constrained from arranging this themselves, they could have asked Pilate to do the job. If the Roman prefect had simply been doing a favor for the priests, he could easily have arranged Jesus's death by any of the considerable means at his disposal (assassination, murder in prison, and so on).

The fact that Jesus was publicly executed by the method of crucifixion can only mean that Rome wanted him dead: Rome alone had the sovereign authority to crucify. Moreover, the point of a public execution, as opposed to a private murder, was to communicate a message. Crucifixion itself implies that Pilate was concerned about sedition. Jesus's death on the cross was Pilate's way of telling Jerusalem's Jews, who had gathered in the holy city for the paschal holiday, to desist from any thought of rebellion. The Gospel writers, each in his own way, introduce priestly initiative to apologize for Roman fiat, and the evidence suggests that the priests must have been somehow involved. But the historical fact behind the Passion narratives—Jesus's death on a cross—points to a primarily Roman agenda.

Moderns who wish to render artisti-

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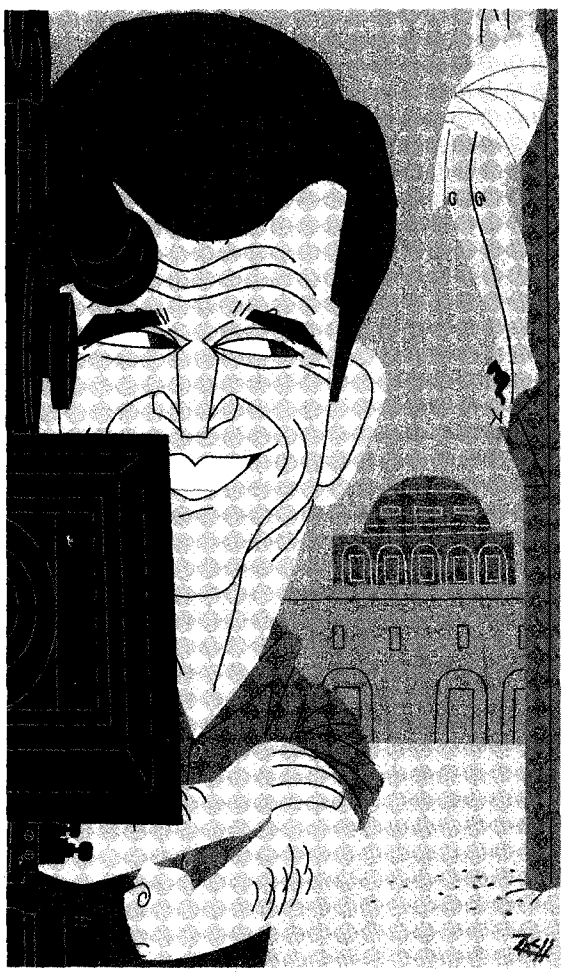
cally something of the Gospel stories have several options. Bach and Pasolini focused on single Gospels, thereby sparing themselves the chore of sorting through and deciding between their differing traditions. Kazantzakis and Scorsese chose instead to select, to blend, and to adapt themes from all the Gospels to create a modern story. But Gibson, by so vociferously insisting that he was committed both to the Gospel narratives and to "historical accuracy" (hence his much-trumpeted use of Aramaic and—oops—Latin), had put himself in an interesting bind.

THE SCRIPT, WHEN WE got it, shocked us. Nothing of Gibson's published remarks, or of Fulco's and Gibson's private assurances, had prepared us for what we saw. Each scholar, independent of the others, wrote his or her own comments on the document. We then boiled them down, bulleted our points, and made the whole discussion easy to digest. The first section of our report explained the historical connection between passion plays and the slaughter of European Jews, the dress rehearsals for the Shoah. Then we summarized our responses to the script. We pinpointed its historical errors and—again, since Gibson has so trumpeted his own Catholicism—its deviations from magisterial principles of biblical interpretation. We concluded with general recommendations for certain changes in the script. Four short appendices—two historical, two directly script-related—traversed this same terrain from different directions. A final appendix provided excerpts from official Catholic teaching.

Receiving criticism is never easy. As teachers and as scholars, who regularly give and get criticism, we knew this. We also knew that we were asking Gibson to revise his script substantially. We knew that we were working against his enthusiasm, his utter lack of knowledge, and his investment of time and money. We pinned our hopes on his avowed interest in historicity, on his evident willingness to hear what we had to say, and on his decency. In retrospect, we also functioned with a naïveté that is peculiar to educators: the belief that, once an error is made plain, a person will prefer the truth.

Fulco knew by April 27 what the substance of our response had been: Fisher had already communicated privately with him. By May 2, we had our eighteen-page report assembled. Fisher and Korn co-wrote the cover letter on USCCB stationery, and sent the report to Icon by May 5. On May 9, members of the group received our copies. We waited. Icon was silent. When Korn phoned Fulco on May 12 to get his sense of the report, Fulco declined to share his views. He did mention that he, Gibson, and other Icon executives were scheduled to meet the following day. More silence.



Mel Gibson by Zach Trenholm for The New Republic

Meanwhile, disturbances began to accrue. After a story about Gibson's movie ran in the *Los Angeles Times*, one of the group's members, Mary Boys, S.N.J.M., received "three vicious letters filled with personal attacks and anti-Semitic drivel." (Boys is a chaired professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, an adviser on ecumenical affairs to the USCCB, a member of the Catholic Biblical Association, and a tireless worker in the area of Catholic-Jewish relations. She knows anti-Semitic drivel when she sees it.) At the same time, another member of the scholars group, Father John Pawlikowski, O.S.M., professor of social ethics at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, mentioned an unhappy encounter that a friend of his—like Fulco, a professor at Loyola Marymount—had had with other Jesuits following Loyola's commencement ceremonies on May 11. On that day, Gibson had received an honorary doctorate. These Jesuits informed Pawlikowski's colleague that "Father Fulco has written a beautiful script; how could we possibly attack him? How could anyone criticize the story of the Passion? They were all aware of our report, so Fulco is obviously spreading the word."

We were surprised: we had understood that, for the time being, our report, like Gibson's script, was meant to be kept between us and Icon. "They"—Fulco, Gibson, and company—"are simply going to discredit us," Pawlikowski concluded. On May 16, the truth of his words, and the reasons for Icon's silence, became clear. On that date, Fisher, Korn, the ADL, and the USCCB received a letter from Gibson's attorney. Dated May 9, written within days of Icon's receipt of our report, the letter had sat for a week while we waited for their response, and Gibson collected his degree, and Fulco avoided Korn, and the Icon executives and Fulco conferred.

"As you are fully aware, you are in possession of property stolen from Icon, namely a draft of the screenplay for the Picture," the letter began. "At no time did Mr. Gibson authorize the release of this material to you or to any other third party for dissemination to you." The lawyering went on for another page: "You have admitted that you came into possession of this stolen property by means that are illegal." "You are now attempting to force my clients to alter the screenplay to the Picture to suit your own religious views." Our side was threatening to discredit the film, and to

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intimidate Gibson. ("This act is itself illegal—it is called extortion.") All scripts were to be returned by 5:00 p.m. on May 13. (Poor organization, since this letter was faxed three days after its own deadline.) Court orders, lawsuits, reserved rights and remedies, and all sorts of terrible consequences might and could and would follow. Very truly yours, et cetera.

"Gibson, Fulco and McEveety were all on the phone with me well before," Fisher wrote to me on May 20. "They knew we had the script, as they had known for some time, and did not ask for it back." Icon's new claim also made nonsense of the earlier condition of confidentiality to which we had assented before seeing the screenplay: who else would have required that? No matter. Lawyers were in the saddle; reason was dying.

THEN, ON MAY 30, THE SPIN cycle formally kicked in. Zenit, a Catholic news service based in Rome, picked up an earlier article in the *Denver Catholic Register* written by Archbishop Charles Chaput in defense of the film. Chaput evidently felt that "a film of sincere faith" should not be charged with potentially stirring up anti-Semitism. "Between a decent man and his critics," Chaput continued, "I'll choose the decent man every time—until the evidence shows otherwise." (Icon arranged for a subtitled version of Gibson's film to be shown at a private screening in Colorado Springs the last week of June. I await with interest the archbishop's response.)

Zenit embedded Chaput's remarks, surprisingly, within a larger and detailed review of our supposedly confidential report. It repeated our criticisms (without, of course, addressing them), and then quoted what it deemed our "central complaint," namely, that Gibson's "graphic movie" could "re-awaken the very anti-Semitic attitudes that we have devoted our careers to combating." Zenit prefaced its report of our concern by singling out for mention one member of our group, Amy Jill Levine. The reporter had gone to her website and indignantly pulled one of her self-descriptions: "a Yankee Jewish feminist." (Lest Levine's remark be misunderstood, let the record state that she was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts and spends her summers grieving for the Red Sox.) Levine is a chaired professor of New Testament studies at Vanderbilt's divinity school and the author of prize-winning studies on early Judaism, Christian origins, and the Gospel of Matthew. Still, nothing in particular distinguished her from the rest of us except, perhaps, the humor of her self-description and her recognizably Jewish name.

SOMEONE AT ICON HAD CLEARLY leaked our report to Zenit—"a pre-emptive, ad hominem attack," Fisher observed to the USCCB, "to discredit the scholarship of the group." Icon's lawyers focused on the Bishops Conference. Mark Chopko, general counsel for the USCCB, finally sent a formal letter to the scholars on June 9 in which he repeated Icon's assertion that we had obtained the screenplay without permission. Chopko also relayed what has since become an official trope of the Icon spin: "The draft of the screenplay is not what the final film will contain."

These two assertions—that the script was purloined, and that the final film is quite different from the script—have been endlessly repeated in numerous follow-up stories in Reuters, the *New York Daily News,* and elsewhere. *NewsMax.com* even had the chutzpah to insinuate that the scholars had leaked their own "supposedly confidential report" to the news media. And disinformation likewise abounds. The Religion News Service claimed that the "group of scholars ... has withdrawn its criticisms." We have not. We stand by them. The report in Reuters suggested that the film's potential anti-Semitism concerned the Jews, while the violation of church teaching concerned the Catholics. This, too, is false. The Catholics feel even greater urgency about its anti-Semitism, because the ethical issue for them is so clear. Jews are the objects of anti-Semitism, but Catholics and other Christians, inspired by Gibson's movie, could well become its agents. (Indeed, on the evidence of the anti-Semitic hate mail that we have all received since being named as critics of Gibson's screenplay, this response is already in play.)

Gibson has continued to speak earnestly of his film as "conforming" to the New Testament. Unless he ditched the script with which he was working as late as March, wrote an almost entirely new one, re-assembled his cast, re-shot his movie, and then edited it in time to be screened in June, this statement, too, must be false. Six pages of our report lay out for him exactly those places where he not only misreads but actually contravenes material given in the Gospels. And his historical mistakes, no less profound, are spelled out for him there, too.

In light of Gibson's and Icon's contact with Fisher prior to receiving our report, their first assertion—that we were working with a stolen script—is at least disingenuous. Gibson himself may not have formally "authorized" our reviewing his screenplay. But he certainly knew what we were doing. He had cleared Fulco to function as the point man. And, through Fisher, he had been in contact with us. Also, the initial condition of confidentiality could only have come from his side. Icon did not decide that the script had been "stolen" until they learned of our response and did not like it.

The second assertion of Gibson's company—that the film, which of course we have not seen, does not follow the screenplay, which we have seen—also seems simply false. A rough cut already existed before March 7, when the *Journal's* reporter viewed it. Shortly thereafter, on March 25, Fulco—who is well positioned to know—stated plainly that "the film follows the script quite faithfully." And Gibson's and Icon's knowledge that we were reviewing the screenplay counts against their second claim also. Gibson had asked Fisher on April 24 to communicate on his behalf with our group. Why would he be so concerned with our evaluation if he knew that what we were evaluating bore so little resemblance to his actual film?

Finally, details of the film as reviewed by the insider-fan on June 26 conform exactly, alas, to what we had seen in the script. Satan inciting the executioners at their task; "a vicious riot of frenzied hatred between Romans and Jews with the Savior [en route to Golgotha] on the ground in the middle of it getting it from both sides"; the post-crucifixion Mary-and-Jesus *pietà*—no such scenes exist in the Gospels. But they are all in the screenplay that we saw.

That script—and, on the evidence, the film—presents neither a true rendition of the Gospel stories nor a historically accurate account of what could have happened in Jerusalem, on Passover, when Pilate was prefect and Caiaphas was high priest. Instead Gibson will apparently release what Christopher Noxon, in his article for the *Times*, had correctly described already in March: "a

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big-budget dramatization of key points of traditionalist theology." The true historical framing of Gibson's script is neither early first-century Judea (where Jesus of Nazareth died) nor the late first-century Mediterranean diaspora (where the evangelists composed their Gospels). It is post-medieval Roman Catholic Europe. Fulco could have spared himself a lot of trouble and just put the entire script into Latin. Not pagan Roman Latin, but Christian Roman Latin. For *that* is the true language of Gibson's story.

What happens now? Chopko, the USCCB general counsel, formally notified Icon of the bishops' regrets "that this situation has occurred, and offer our apologies." On June 11, the USCCB issued a statement clarifying its official relationship to our report. The bishops knew what we were doing (Fisher, an officer for this group, had informed them), but the plenum group had not "established, authorized, reviewed, or approved the report written by its members." This is absolutely true. Fisher, together with Korn, had convened us. We worked as independent scholars, though four of us also have formal connections with the USCCB.

Those four of us have posted a review of these events on the Boston College website. We have also posted there an analysis of the mystical writings of Sister Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774–1824), one of the visionary nuns whose writings Gibson used for his script. Emmerich wrote in her diary that she had "seen" the high priest ordering the cross to be made in the courtyard of the Temple itself. The high priest's servants, in her visions, bribe Jerusalem's population to assemble in the Temple at night to demand Jesus's death; they even tip the Roman executioners. Emmerich's Pilate criticizes the high priests for their physical abuse of Jesus, but finally he consents to crucify him, because he fears that the high priest wants to start a revolt against Rome. And so on.

Emmerich was not writing history. She was having visions. But—as *The Wall Street Journal*, the film's unofficial website, and numerous news articles since have all mentioned—Gibson used Emmerich's fantasies for his supposedly "historical" script. Since the Boston College posting has brought this piece of the story forward, Paul Lauer, Icon's director of marketing, has denied that Gibson used Emmerich's writings. But he had: the nun's lurid images figured prominently in the version of the screenplay that we read and that Gibson was concerned about as recently as April 24.

Icon's publicist, Alan Nierob, has spun the communications from the USCCB as if the bishops had recanted the project entirely. They have not. Both Chopko and the conference affirm the USCCB's commitment to reviewing the film. The conference's statement of June 11 closes by referring to the importance and the sensitivity of dramatizations of the Passion. It directs readers to its own published guidelines for such, "reminding Catholics that the correct presentation of the Gospel accounts of the Passion and death of Jesus Christ do not support anti-Semitism."

Monsignor Francis Maniscalo, the memo's author, concludes by naming further publications assembled by the bishops. These instruct the church on the Shoah, on Catholic remembrance of the Holocaust, and on Catholic preaching about Jews and Judaism. "The Conference," Maniscalo closes, "reserves its right to review and comment on this and all other films." Hutton Gibson might disregard these men as the servants of Freemasons and Jews, but his son will doubtless be hearing from them again. I hope that they bring to their eventual review of this unfortunate film the full weight of their unique moral authority.

Steve McEveety, the Icon producer, has reiterated that Gibson's film "has not even been completed." The release date seems set for next spring. That still gives Gibson lots of time to work on it, and to address its most egregious aspects. Compelled by whatever combination of individual temperament and commercial self-interest to repudiate the scholars' report, he can still avail himself of it.

The prognosis does not look good. While he has continued to insist upon his personal piety and his commitment to historical truth-telling, Gibson has just executed what looks like a very cynical marketing end-run. As *The Washington Times* reported on July 7, Gibson "is shopping his film to a more receptive audience: evangelical Christians, conservative Catholics, and Orthodox Jews." Orthodox Jews, I can say with authority, tend to know next to nothing about the Gospels (unless, of course, they are scholars of the field). Conservative Catholics are Gibson's set-point to begin with. But evangelical Christians, in my experience, know their Scriptures very, very well. Their biblical literacy may yet cause Icon's spinmeisters to stumble. I certainly hope so.

Anti-Semitism is not the problem in America that it is in the rest of the world. (The hateful e-mails that we have received have been balanced by others, from church leaders of inter-faith efforts across the country, expressing their support and their concern.) But I shudder to think how *The Passion* will play once its subtitles shift from English to Polish, or Spanish, or French, or Russian. When violence breaks out, Mel Gibson will have a much higher authority than professors and bishops to answer to. ■

Wittgenstein's Screw

The calendar moves by degrees.
Someone's finger is pointing at the rain,
at gulls in gray dunes that float up
into their inverse likeness. There they hover
as torn up clouds over beaches drifting
with the tide, dancing with it, draping
themselves over so they seem unmoving.
Then I see a heron by the inlet.
He stands, one thing, unmoved, as if
cut out from whatever had stood there
before him, exactly filling his space
so nothing is left over, scissored out
of gray blue sky and cloud, gray blue water
so the longer you look the more he
disappears until at last what you thought
some sort of finality, some definitive shape,
is gone, and you look right through to sky
and water and beyond to gulls marking dunes
like punctuation until they too are released
into water and cloud, and the ripe rain is turning
and moving straight at you as if it is something,
and the sky moves on, turning like
Wittgenstein's screw that turns without moving
any part of the mechanism to which it is attached.

BRIAN SWANN

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Helen Vendler
The Hurt Soul

COLLECTED POEMS
By Robert Lowell
Edited by Frank Bidart and David Gewanter, with the editorial assistance of DeSales Harrison
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1,186 pp., $45)

I.

ROBERT LOWELL WAS, TO the world's eye, the Byron of postwar America. He came, on his mother's side, from the Mayflower aristocracy (the Winslows); on his father's side, from the New England intellectual aristocracy (the poets James Russell Lowell and Amy Lowell, the astronomer Percival Lowell, the Harvard president Abbot Lawrence Lowell). Lowell lived theatrically, publicly, and mockingly, marrying three times, living on both sides of the Atlantic, participating in political protests, resurrecting himself after serial breakdowns, and publishing—aside from his plays and his prose—many volumes of much-noticed poetry.

As I say, that was the view of the newspapers and the public. Friends (among them Peter Taylor, Randall Jarrell, John Berryman, and Elizabeth Bishop) saw a different Lowell: an enchanting talker, a solicitous and kind ally, the most committed of writers, the most strenuous of revisers. Lowell received loyalty and generosity in return, notably from his second wife, the writer Elizabeth Hardwick, who saw him in and out of hospitals almost every year during their long marriage, and who sheltered him when his third marriage ended. And readers worldwide found their own Lowell, a gripping and original voice, as impossible to shake off as the Ancient Mariner. "There was a ship," says the Ancient Mariner, and the wedding-guest listens like a three years' child. "I saw my city in the Scales, the pans/Of judgment rising and descending," Lowell's voice said to me (from the page) when I was seventeen. I saw my Boston—its Puritan burying grounds with their death's-head slates, its Pepperpot Bridge over the Charles—through Lowell's apocalyptic eye:

> I saw the sky descending, black and white,
> Not blue, on Boston where the winters wore
> The skulls to jack-o'-lanterns on the slates,
> ...
> The wild ingrafted olive and the root
>
> Are withered, and a winter drifts to where
> The Pepperpot, ironic rainbow, spans
> Charles River and its scales of scorched-earth miles.
> I saw my city in the Scales, the pans
> Of judgment rising and descending. Piles
> Of dead leaves char the air—
> And I am a red arrow on this graph
> Of Revelations. Every dove is sold....

And I was not the only reader transfixed by Lowell's passion, momentum, and slashing adjectives. *Lord Weary's Castle,* in which this Boston poem appeared, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1946, when Lowell was in his twenties.

World War II was still on when Lowell was writing his first poems, and he was seen, at his debut, as a war poet and a "Catholic poet." (The adopted Catholicism was sloughed off when his marriage to the novelist Jean Stafford—herself a convert—was dissolved in 1948.) War, seen as the culmination of capitalism, and Catholicism, seen as redemption from the self, were—along with the Puritan family legacy—the chief strands in *Lord Weary's Castle.* (Many of its poems were reworked from still earlier poems collected in 1944 in a never-reprinted Cummington Press volume called *Land of Unlikeness.*) After a less impressive second book, *The Mills of the Kavanaughs,* in 1951, Lowell's third volume, *Life Studies*, which appeared in 1959, confounded readers who were expecting more prophecy, more thunderous lines, more New England history. Some of the new poems—abandoning stanza, rhyme, and meter—seemed so mild as to be almost nonexistent:

> In my Father's bedroom:
> blue threads as thin
> as pen-writing on the bedspread,
> blue dots on the curtains,
> a blue kimono,
> Chinese sandals with blue plush straps.

Commentators ignored the mild poems; it was the scandalous ones that drew attention. Lowell's "life studies" (the term borrowed from the artist's studio) were written in the wake of his parents' deaths: they presented a series of naked portraits, including not only the poet's frustrated mother, his weak father, and other family members, but also himself in the "house for the 'mentally ill.'" The book offered scathing marital scenes, sometimes drugged ("Tamed by *Miltown,* we lie on Mother's bed"), sometimes acrid ("Oh the monotonous meanness of his lust...."). Naturally, in the reviews content trumped form, and it was not until much later that the eloquent formal achievement of *Life Studies*—a minimalist colloquiality learned in part from Elizabeth Bishop—began to be recognized.

NO SOONER HAD LOWELL consolidated the free verse of *Life Studies* in some hesitant and depressed poems of *For the Union Dead* (1964) than he confused the reading world again, this time by publishing strict and sardonic Marvellian poems in rhyming couplets. *Near the Ocean,* in 1967, exhibited brilliantly crisp protests against the Vietnam war:

> No weekends for the gods now. Wars flicker, earth licks its open sores,
> fresh breakage, fresh promotions, chance
> assassinations, no advance.
> Only man thinning out his kind
> sounds through the Sabbath noon, the blind
> swipe of the pruner and his knife
> busy about the tree of life....

Lowell continued his renewed attachment to form in the blank-verse sonnets that he proceeded to write obsessively for six years, between 1967 and 1973. They owed something to his elation after he was prescribed lithium and thought—mistakenly—that he could look forward to a life without any more breakdowns. The sonnets first appeared in *Notebook 1967–68,* an election-year diary-in-verse dashed off as successive fourteen-line

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items, poems aiming (unlike the elegiac "life studies") at the spontaneity of reportage. The poet becomes, in this reconceiving of his role, a newscaster and a news analyst. *Notebook 1967–68* ends with the Democratic defeat: "This year runs out in the movies, it must be written/in bad, straightforward, unscanning sentences."

After two revisions and expansions of *Notebook,* Lowell published simultaneously in 1973, in a grandiloquent move, three volumes of sonnets. The first, *History* (incorporating many of the *Notebook* poems, but reworked), is nothing less than a history of the world, beginning with Genesis and ending with the poet's anticipation of his own death. As *History* closes, Lowell dreams that he is back on a Charles River bridge on which Death gallops. (The scene is, according to a note by the poet, based on a landscape by his school friend Frank Parker, whose arresting frontispieces to Lowell's books are reproduced in the *Collected Poems.*)

> We will follow our skeletons on the girder,
> out of life and Boston, singing with Freud:
> "God's ways are dark and very seldom pleasant."

The second book of sonnets, *For Lizzie and Harriet,* concerns Lowell's wife and daughter, as he separates from them and moves to England; and the third, *The Dolphin,* is a love sequence to the writer Caroline Blackwood, who, after bearing Lowell a son, became his third wife (the marriage failed not long before the poet's death). These hundreds of sonnets, in three volumes, could be seen as an unrelenting return to the grinding pentameters of Lowell's early work. But the poet had renounced his early inflexible syntactic armature: these poems were phrasal, impressionistic, aggregative, reminiscent, allusive, hard to read. They were sometimes impersonal, sometimes personal; transient, then marmoreal; domestic, but also historical; inconsequential and yet aphoristic; light and weighty at once. They have yet to be absorbed by criticism.

COURTESY ELIZABETH HARDWICK

Robert Lowell, Venice, 1969

To open *History*—characteristically bringing a density of intellectual reference into play—Lowell brutally rewrote the Fall, placing Adam and Eve in Blue Hill, Maine, inserting Orpheus into the Bible, and using as its dénouement the Freudian incest-taboo and the parricide of *Moses and Monotheism.* All the male personages are in some way Lowell in fantasy, the *poète maudit,* unassimilable either through ennui or through rage:

> In the Beginning, the Sabbath could last a week,
> God grumbling secrecies behind Blue Hill....
> The serpent walked on foot like us in Eden;
> glorified by the perfect Northern exposure,
> Eve and Adam knew their nakedness,
> a discovery to be repeated many times...
> in joyless stupor? ... Orpheus in Genesis
> hacked words from brute sound, and taught men English,
> plucked all the flowers, deflowered all the girls
> with the overemphasis of a father.
> He used too many words, his sons killed him,
> dancing with grateful gaiety round the cookout.

The terrible energies of the sonnets faltered in the mid-1970s, as Lowell's third marriage degenerated during his residence in England. The poet's last book, *Day by Day,* which was published in 1977, shortly before he died, strays into an almost posthumous tone in wayward free-verse poems that often bear elegiac titles ("Last Walk," "Epilogue"). The pace is desultory, interrupted, the poet unconsentingly resigned:

> Why plan; when we stop?
> ...
> My eyes flicker, the immortal
> is scraped unconsenting from the mortal.

Lowell's death was as theatrical as his life: he died in a taxi, returning from Ireland to Elizabeth Hardwick in New York, carrying a portrait of Caroline Blackwood. The newspapers reported the Boston funeral, with the two wives (Jean Stafford having died) and the two children in attendance at a high mass in the Church of the Advent. (When Lowell—an unbeliever—told me he had arranged in his will for that sort of funeral, I asked why he would want a religious service. "That's how we're buried," he said—a member of the New England family to the last.)

I have not mentioned, in this sketch of Lowell's poetic accomplishment, his translations of European lyrics by poets from Sappho to Montale, collected in a volume called *Imitations* (1961). Lowell claimed the right, in calling these lyrics "imitations" rather than translations, to turn them into poems of his own: "I have tried to write alive English and to do what my authors might have done if

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they were writing their poems now and in America." *Imitations* gave a much-needed impetus to imaginative methods of translation, quietly suggesting to America that it needed the European deposit of poetry for its own best success. And by doing these imitations Lowell worked out new styles for himself, borrowing Akhmatova's terseness, Mandelstam's metaphorical leaps, Montale's dry intellectuality.

THIS BRIEF ACCOUNT IS MERELY a reminder of how much poetry Lowell published in the thirty-three years between 1944 and 1977. It does not begin to suggest the difficulties of collecting that poetry into a single book. Lowell's reputation faded as many of his books, during the quarter-century after his death, dropped out of print. Frank Bidart, a celebrated and original poet in his own right, was Lowell's student at Harvard, and eventually he became the friend whom Lowell increasingly consulted, not only during the revising that expanded *Notebook* into *History* and *For Lizzie and Harriet*, but also during the composition of *Day by Day*. More than anyone else, Bidart has the intellectual authority to edit a *Collected Poems*, and he has now given us this extraordinary thousand-page book, handsomely annotated by himself and David Gewanter. In several cases where a poem exists in more than one defensible version, Bidart has given the alternate text in an appendix or in the notes. The whole of *Land of Unlikeness* appears in another appendix, and a few uncollected poems in yet another. Stephen Axelrod's helpful chronology of Lowell's life is also included.

The one lamentable exclusion from the *Collected Poems* is *Notebook 1967–68*. The poetic of this first *Notebook* is markedly different from those of the volumes bracketing it, the didactic *Near the Ocean* and the encyclopedic *History*. Ideally, we should have the first *Notebook*'s journalism-on-the-run acknowledged as one of the many poetics that Lowell decided to espouse. As Bidart explains, the *Collected Poems* could not have been compressed into a single volume had it included *Notebook 1967–68*; and it is true that those poems appear in *History*, though revised and altered in sequence. The advantages of having "all" of Lowell's poems in one volume are evident. Still, as the memory of the original publication of *Notebook* recedes, will the wonderful experiment of a poet's day-by-day sketchbook be forgotten?

The poetry of "witness" has been much abused by hangers-on to political excitement, but Lowell's witnessing in *Notebook*—personal and for the most part persuasive—should not be dropped from the history of twentieth-century on-the-spot lyric testimony. It is thanks to Lowell, for instance, that we have the single credible poem bringing to life the March on Washington. In it we see the amateur ranks of the Vietnam war protesters, fearful green recruits lost in the marmoreal gigantism of the capital, confronted by the real ranks, the riot-squad Army. What is the civilian to think of these threatening young Army men in their alien gear? Is he their admirer or their enemy?

> Under the too white marmoreal
> Lincoln Memorial,
> the too tall marmoreal Washington
> Obelisk,
> gazing into the too long reflecting
> pool,
> the reddish trees, the withering
> autumn sky,
> the remorseless, amplified harangues
> for peace—
> lovely to lock arms, to march absurdly
> locked
> (unlocking to keep my wet glasses
> from slipping)
> to see the cigarette match quaking in
> my fingers,
> then to step off like green Union
> Army recruits
> for the first Bull Run, sped by
> photographers,
> the notables, the girls . . . fear, glory,
> chaos, rout . . .
> our green army staggered out on the
> miles-long green fields,
> met by the other army, the Martian,
> the ape, the hero,
> his new-fangled rifle, his green new
> steel helmet.

This is adult poetry; it sketches all the feelings of an intense—but also intensely self-aware and self-mocking—"witness." It is not deceived about America and its excessive marble pretensions, and it is also not deceived about the longueurs of "harangues for peace." It wishes to maintain its patriotism, even its tenderness toward the youthful troops, yet it must also register their terrifying equipment (soon to force the civilian marchers into chaos and rout). Even though the sonnet is reprinted in *History*, it makes a very different effect among the on-the-go surprises of *Notebook*.

II.

THE APPEARANCE OF ROBERT Lowell's *Collected Poems* ought to do much to burnish his reputation, as young readers (to whom he is barely a name attached to out-of-print volumes) discover the exhilaration of reading him entire, in poems that grant adequate complexity to human enterprise and thought. The publication of a *Collected Poems* necessarily provokes judgment on the significance of a poet's life work. There is, in Lowell's case, the matter of his historical relevance, but also of his achievement as an experimental writer adding to the stock of available poetic modes as well as to the record of contemporary human emotions.

Lowell was, and continued to be, a war poet, attending to war as a conscientious objector in World War II and serving five months in jail for his convictions. He meditated on earlier wars (the Revolution, the Civil War) and on the new existence of atomic war. He returned to war poetry during the Vietnam war (*History* includes a devastating dramatic monologue about My Lai called "Women, Children, Babies, Cows, Cats"). *History* itself is, among other things, a scrapbook of wars from Homeric times to the present.

Lowell grasped America's dominant place in global politics: the poem "July in Washington" begins with a view of the city's architectural circles radiating outward, as "The heavy spokes of this wheel/touch the sore spots of the earth." His war poetry takes its elegiac force from the decline in American political virtue from the Revolutionary War and the Civil War to Hiroshima and after, memorialized in "For the Union Dead":

> On a thousand small town New
> England greens,
> the old white churches hold their air
> of sparse, sincere rebellion; frayed
> flags
> quilt the graveyards of the Grand
> Army of the Republic.
>
> The stone statues of the abstract
> Union Soldier
> grow slimmer and younger each
> year—

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THE "ROAD MAP"

Will it lead to peace or to devastating war?

The United States, the United Nations, the European Union, and Russia – labeled, collectively, the "Quartet" – have devised a plan called the "Road Map." The Road Map attempts to bring about peace in Israel/Palestine over a three-year period. At the end of that period, the emergence of a Palestinian state is envisioned, a state that is expected to live alongside of Israel in "peace and security."

What are the facts?

Unfriendly promoters. Of the four promoters of the Road Map, only one – the United States – can be considered friendly to and supportive of Israel. In the European Union, the centuries-old virus of anti-Semitism has again reared its ugly head, now disguised as anti-Israelism or anti-Zionism. Russia has always been hostile to Israel and has been an enthusiastic supplier of weapons to the enemies of the Jewish State since its creation. The UN seems to take up most of its time in condemnation of Israel and in discriminating against it, to such an extent that Israel is the only country that is ineligible to become a member of the Security Council.

It is likely, therefore, that the interests of three of the four designers of the Road Map are not in promoting peace, but, hypocritically, rather in the destruction of Israel or at least in its not surviving as a Jewish State.

Palestinian State: a new and unwarranted idea. The idea that the so-called "Palestinians" should have their own state has now been accepted as a just and desirable goal by most of the world. Sad to say, our own president has bought into this concept. One must regretfully assume that he did so mostly in order to appease our "Arab friends," who are outraged about our waging war against Iraq. It buys into the myth that the Israeli-Arab dispute is at the heart of the endemic conflicts in the area and that forcing Israel to "take risks for peace" is a means of assuaging Arab humiliation. But should the safety of Israel, America's only true and reliable ally in that part of the world, be jeopardized or sacrificed on the illusive altar of "Arab friendship?" A Palestinian state did not occur to anybody (even to the "Palestinians" themselves), when the Ottomans were the rulers in the land, when Great Britain had the Palestine Mandate, or when Jordan was in occupation of the "West Bank" for nineteen years after Israel's War of Independence in 1948. The concept of a Palestinian state did not arise until after the Six-Day War of 1967, in which Israel was victorious, wrested the "West Bank" from Jordan, the Gaza Strip from Egypt, and has been in administration of those territories since.

> "The solution: Total autonomy for Israel's Arab minority, within Israel, the Jewish State – a reward to which so many minorities in the world have aspired, but which has been granted to only a very few."

Israel is a tiny country, a sliver on the Mediterranean coast. It is even now in a strategically almost impossible position. Without the "depth" of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and without full control of the Jordan Valley it would be utterly indefensible. Israeli generals know that and American generals know that. And, of course, Arab generals know that also. But Israel needs to be able to defend itself, because all of its immediate neighbors – Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon – no matter what they may be saying for public consumption, have only one primary military and foreign policy objective and that is to destroy Israel, to drive the hated Jews into the sea, and to finish what they call the "Zionist Enterprise" once and for all. To believe that the "Palestinians," once they had their own state, would be peaceful neighbors of a truncated and mortally vulnerable Israel or that the other Arabs states and Iran would turn from wolves to lambs is to either engage in wishful thinking or quite deliberately be co-conspirators in the eventual destruction of the Jewish State.

The Road Map will inevitably go the way that other previous "peace plans" have gone – all of which demanded "sacrifices for peace" from Israel, yielding large chunks of territory for only empty words from the Arabs. But even if Israel, tired from decades of bloodletting and under unbearable pressure from the "international community," would acquiesce to such a suicidal path, the "Palestinians" would not allow it to happen. Their hatred of the Jews and the inculcation of their children to die as martyrs are such that they would be unable and unwilling to stop the terror that they have visited upon the Holy Land. Another bloody war, rather than peace, is the likely outcome of the Road Map. What is the "solution" that so far has eluded everybody? It is what Israel has always been willing to grant: total autonomy for its Arab minority within Israel, the Jewish State. It is a reward to which so many minorities in the world have aspired, but which has been granted to only a very few.

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wasp-waisted, they doze over muskets
and muse through their sideburns....

There are no statues for the last war
here;
on Boylston Street, a commercial
photograph
shows Hiroshima boiling

over a Mosler Safe, the "Rock of
Ages"
that survived the blast.

By the time of the Vietnam war, in "Waking Early Sunday Morning," American imperialism seemed to Lowell like a Philistine Goliath carrying out "mass liquidations":

Hammering military splendor,
top-heavy Goliath in full armor—
little redemption in the mass
liquidations of their brass,
elephant and phalanx moving
with the times and still
improving....

And in his elegy for the planet closing *this poem*, Lowell eerily foresees that our children will "fall/in small war on the heels of small/war," as we try "until the end of time/to police the earth." Lowell is the only one of our postwar poets to sustain a lifelong critique of America as a political and military nation.

With the withering of nobler communal purposes, Lowell argues, the manifest destiny of the United States loses its luster, and the life of the country becomes merely one of the many lurid spectacles of "History." Through the dispassionate telescope of the chronicler, human lives are flattened into repetitive archetype. Events have neither internal nor external intelligibility. Men come, men go, men kill:

From the first cave, the first farm,
the first sage,
inalienable the human right to kill—
"You must get used," they say, "to
seeing guns,
to using guns." Guns too are mortal.
Guns
failed Che Guevara, Marie
Antoinette,
Leon Trotsky, the children of the
Tsar—
chivalrous ornaments to power.

As a child and an adolescent, Lowell always imagined himself starring within the phantasmagoria of history, whether as one of the heroes (Napoleon), one of the villains (Caligula), or one of the saints (Louis IX). Yet the poetics of *History* refuses that adolescent apotheosis of the singular, that identification with the extraordinary; it puts the South American outlaw and the guillotined queen and the executed Romanovs in a single couplet, with nobody on a plinth, nobody immortal—not even, in the long run, the guns that topple regimes.

BESIDES BEING A NOTABLE POET of civic life, Lowell is our poet of the Freudian family romance. Owing to the accident of his bipolar illness, for which there was at the time no adequate pharmaceutical treatment, he found himself often in the offices of therapists, invited, by the associative ritual of therapy, to talk in non-intellectualized ways about his childhood, his parents, his sexual life. "Confessional poetry" became culturally significant not only in recording the immense social and familial influence of the fifty-minute hour, but also in showing how that hour (falling so "naturally" into a lyric arc) affected the composition of American verse—in Plath, Berryman, Sexton, and Bishop as well as in Lowell. Therapy is a matter of the insignificant detail yielding the significant insight—a process that incarnates the poetic of *Life Studies*. In "Terminal Days at Beverly Farms," the poet recognizes the reverse snobbery of his father in ordering his Chevrolet to be de-chromed, just as he recognizes the stultification of his father's mind in its impoverished exaggerations, its aged clichés:

Father had had two coronaries.
He still treasured underhand
economies,
but his best friend was his little black
Chevie,
garaged like a sacrificial steer
with gilded hooves,
yet sensationally sober,
and with less side than an old dancing
pump.
The local dealer, a "buccaneer,"
had been bribed a "king's ransom"
to quickly deliver a car without
chrome.

This poem is, in substance, the patient's answer to a therapist's questions: "How did your father feel about his money? How did he see himself?" The chromeless car, the stagy language, have reposed in the son's unconscious for years, and now they are suddenly brought to light and made significant. The confidences of therapy, with their apparent illogicalities of associative conjunction, resemble the accumulating details of a poem; they issue in what appears at first a form merely fortuitous, until a critical mass is reached and (in Stevens's words) "the bright obvious stands forth in cold." Needless to say, the rambling and incoherent conversations of psychiatric clients are nothing like the exquisitely compressed-for-effect "revelations" of *Life Studies*; but Lowell's codification of the poetry of the therapeutic hour—so fruitful an invention that it has now been exhausted by two generations of poets—gave him a particular importance in the second half of the century.

LOWELL WAS, THEN, A MARKEDLY intelligent and resourceful poet of war, politics, and personal analysis; but he was also a fascinating poet of love, sex, and contemporary marriage. He admired Hardy, he once said, because Hardy's poems concerned themselves with the "real relations" between men and women. Yet Lowell needed the Petrarchan tradition of sexual idealization as well as the Hardyesque tradition of marital conflict and disillusion. Lowell's Petrarchan poems rejoice in their own continuity with the lyrical past even as they depart from it. In "Obit," though the poet is beginning a new love affair, he must cry out, with a pang of mortal sorrow, to the wife he is leaving:

Our love will not come back on
fortune's wheel—
...
I'm for and with myself in my
otherness,
in the eternal return of earth's fairer
children,
the lily, the rose, the sun on brick at
dusk,
the loved, the lover, and their fear of
life,
their unconquered flux, insensate
oneness, painful "It was...."
After loving you so much, can I
forget
you for eternity, and have no other
choice?

In the postwar era, as the breakdown

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of marriage became unignorable, Lowell was pre-eminent among American poets in his unblinking analysis of conjugal decline. The sonnet "Marriage" returns us to Adam and Eve in the Garden, as the partners grasp the last distorted fruits of decaying lust:

> Too long we've hungered for its
> ancient fruit,
> marriage with its naked artifice;
> two practised animals, and close to
> widow
> and widower, greedily bending
> forward
> for a last handgrasp of vermillion
> leaves,
> clinging like bloodclots to the smitten
> branch—
> fibrous growths . . . green, sweet,
> golden, black.

Such a brave poem disgusts and pains at once; it is one moment of marriage flayed open. The reader paging through the *Collected Poems* will find that one of the recurrent threads is that of the suffering and elations of sexual being, its turbulence and its shames.

III.

WHERE DID LOWELL—AS he pursued his themes of war, politics, family, history, and sex—believe that poetic power resided? At first, he thought that power needed thunderous, epic, theocratic stanzas, with a flavor of *Moby-Dick* and Revelations:

> When the whale's viscera go and the
> roll
> Of its corruption overruns this world
> Beyond tree-swept Nantucket and
> Woods Hole
> And Martha's Vineyard, Sailor,
> will your sword
> Whistle and fall and sink into the fat?
> In the great ash-pit of Jehoshaphat
> The bones cry for the blood of the
> white whale. . . .

After his adherence to formal stanzas in the 1940s and 1950s, it was hardly to be believed that Lowell would come disarmingly to writing free verse about his jail time, in a diction mixing Wordsworth and slang:

> These are the tranquillized *Fifties*,
> and I am forty. Ought I to regret my
> seedtime?
> I was a fire-breathing Catholic C.O.,
> and made my manic statement,
> telling off the state and president,
> and then
> sat waiting sentence in the bull pen
> beside a Negro boy with curlicues
> of marijuana in his hair.

Poetic power no longer seemed to Lowell to reside in the dominating, the Puritanical, the crushing, the oratorical, the interrogative ("Will your sword/Whistle and fall and sink into the fat?")

Perhaps a cognate power returned in some of the masonry of *History*, where the packed is preferred to the loose; but what emerges chiefly in the sonnets is not a wish to dominate apocalyptically, but rather a hope to catch the moment as it flies, to evoke an impression, to mix "the day-to-day with the history." "I wished to describe the immediate instant. . . ," Lowell explained. "Things I felt or saw, or read were drift in the whirlpool, the squeeze of the sonnet and the loose ravel of blank verse. I hoped

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in *Life Studies*—it was a limitation—that each poem might seem as open and single-surfaced as a photograph. *Notebook* is more jagged and imagined than was desirable in *Life Studies.*"

History aims at nothing less than a secularized redescription of the whole human story, voiced in its own impressionistic historiography, neither providential nor "scientific." It would not be easy for the poet to turn away from its nihilistic vision. It is all the more surprising, therefore, that after treating his third marriage in the form of yet more unrhymed sonnets in *The Dolphin*, Lowell could arrive, in his testamentary *Day by Day*, at something other than the eclectic Procrustean postmodernism of the well-made fourteener. What he arrived at was compassion.

To give up on history as a source of power was the only way out of the sonnets for Lowell. Though he could never relinquish history—his primary phantasmagoria—he had to reconceive it. Unwilling any longer to regard people as chess pieces on the board of Fate, and unwilling that his portraits of people be life studies of nakedness delineated from a position of superior analytic skill, Lowell turns to a quasi-religious notion of how human history may be reproduced. Poetic power consists in bestowing on human beings—who are otherwise "poor passing facts" declining after death into the statistics of social science—their "living name." Naming is the first act of man, but most names die with the namer. To find a living name—to immortalize, not to expose or enumerate—is the prayer of "Epilogue," the poem that closes *Day by Day.*

The "living name" is achieved by accuracy, yes, but by an accuracy to which has been added a grace, the shaping force of style. Vermeer is the model, and the nuances of sunlight passing over a wall map are the instance:

> Pray for the grace of accuracy
> Vermeer gave to the sun's
> illumination
> *stealing like the tide across a map*
> to his girl solid with yearning.
> We are poor passing facts,
> warned by that to give
> each figure in the photograph
> his living name.

The poetic of *Day by Day* is a poetic of mercy: the operative words in the passage quoted above are "poor" and "passing." "Passing" conveys the ever-present toll of transience (as in Keats: "The voice I hear this passing night was heard/In ancient days by emperor and clown"; and in Yeats: "Of what is past, or passing, or to come"). "Poor" is the word of compassion; for Lowell, it was a word associated (as early as *Land of Unlikeness*) with Lazarus, the beggar at Dives' door. In his elegy for his grandfather in 1944, the poet implored the Virgin Mary: "Mother, run to the chalice, and bring back/Blood on your finger-tips, for Lazarus who was poor."

The feeling for the poor and passing, the mercy of *Day by Day*, allows Lowell's lifelong grief and shame—hidden by bluster in *Lord Weary's Castle*, oblique with irony in *Life Studies*, stiffened into stoicism in *History*—to be at last fully manifest. There are many compassionate elegies in the book—for John Berryman, Randall Jarrell, Robert Penn Warren, Jean Stafford, Israel Citkovitz (Caroline Blackwood's second husband), Harriet Winslow (Lowell's aunt), W. H. Auden. People are forgiven in *Day by Day*, even Lowell's haughty mother, who told him that he had been unwanted; even his ineffectual father.

In the most open of these open poems, "For Sheridan," all human failure is understood, if not condoned. The poem is addressed to Lowell's five-year-old son, who is, as we say, the picture of his father. Lowell has a photograph of himself at five that shows a face identical to Sheridan's: looking at it, he feels both the curtailed brevity of his own life and the potential for a better life in his son:

> We only live between
> before we are and what we were.
>
> In the lost negative
> you exist,
> a smile, a cypher,
> an old-fashioned face
> in an old-fashioned hat.
>
> Three ages in a flash:
> the same child in the same picture,
> he, I, you,
> chockablock, one stamp
> like mother's wedding silver—
>
> gnome, fish, brute cherubic force.
> We could see clearly
> and all the same things
> before the glass was hurt.
>
> Past fifty, we learn with surprise and
> a sense
> of suicidal absolution
> that what we intended and failed
> could never have happened—
> and must be done better.

If we try to sketch the poetic from which such a poem could spring, we can see that Lowell has repudiated the knotty Latinate compulsions of the past for a transparent but aslant relation to life, expressed with a simplicity of language that is nonetheless oddly enough phrased to imply antecedent reflection. We do not normally think of the boundaries of our life as either the moment before conception ("before we are") or our body after death ("what we were"). We do not regard the subjects of old photos as still existing somewhere "in the lost negative." We do not split ourselves young ("he") from ourselves old ("I") and conflate our two selves with an identical other ("you"). We do not see our own child as an evolutionary paradigm summing up the way ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny ("gnome, fish, brute cherubic force"). We know that we see now through a glass darkly, but we had not realized that the glass was dark because it was hurt, that our vision is dimmed by early damage. The self-forgiveness—a "suicidal absolution"—that permeates *Day by Day* is explained as we see that our youthful life plan "could never have happened," and yet we insist that things must go better for our children—that what we intended must be done better in the future.

This poetic holds that in old age life is no less puzzling than in youth, but that its paradoxes no longer seem to arise from theological mysteries or Freudian abysses; they spring, rather, from the simple facts of existence—our failures, our irrational hopes, our generational loyalties, our genetic helplessness, our knowledge of psychic damage. No large armatures of doctrine or history are required to declare such things. Above all, Lowell's new poetic is persuaded of his resemblance to all other human beings—in damage, in hopeful intentions, in failures. (He used to think of himself as monstrous, unassimilable, an outlaw.) Out of the new conviction of his own

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humanity comes a candid syntax, a simple diction, a reduction of complex process to its essentials ("before the glass was hurt").

All the cunning of this poetic is concealed in its matching up of the slightly "off"—by which I mean that second items do not quite follow from first items. "Before we are" ought to be followed by "after we were": "smile" should be followed by something other than "cypher"; "stamp" is peculiarly coerced (via the subsequent "wedding silver") to mean "monogram"; "gnome" is bizarrely followed by "fish"; and "surprise" plunges into "suicidal absolution." "We could see clearly" should logically be followed by another adverb ("and fully")—but we are given, in lieu of an adverb, a noun phrase: "We could see clearly/and all the same things." This effect of slight mismatching, of incongruity, of perceptual unease, pervades all the poems of *Day by Day*.

This is the poetic of the "hurt" soul, for which no formulation is perfect and no integration is easy. Lowell is not practicing the collage of Pound or Eliot. His new poetic is dependent on human connection, not historical disconnection. Although Lowell has now vowed himself to simplicity, accuracy, and the benignity of the "living name," old age's complex image of human failure and stubborn hope cannot be in itself simple. Hence the "askew" quality of its search for the *mot juste*.

Lowell's own account of this late poetic, sketched in a poem to the novelist Peter Taylor, is darkly commendatory of old age's equivocal "riches":

> This is riches:
> the eminence not to be envied,
> the account
> accumulating layer and angle,
> face and profile,
> 50 years of snapshots,
> the ladder of ripening likeness.
>
> We are things thrown in the air
> alive in flight . . .
> our rust the color of the chameleon.

We perceive in the poems of *Day by Day*, even given their open verse-lines and apparently artless reminiscences, the difficulty of representing all the accumulating layers and angles, all the metaphors accreting over fifty years. We note, in the oblique relations of parts within poems, the arduousness of climbing to the fitting likeness, the strenuousness of changing colors with context even as the body rusts. "We are things thrown in the air/alive in flight." The Heideggerian "thrownness," the inarguable push given by fate, has to be maintained by the effort of wings; but in age, in illness, this is "an eminence not to be envied," since self-buoyancy in motion, and the quickened sensitivity of what Keats called the "chameleon Poet," become harder and harder to sustain.

LOWELL'S OBLIQUE LATE STYLE has not yet been imitated with any success. It stands for a combination of thematic fullness and moral uncertainty that is the mark of an artist who has seen almost too much. Renouncing the sternness and the condemnatory postures of his youthful ideological confidence, the poet finds his steps still stumbling, as he lives, tentatively, painfully, and reflectively, day by day. If we ask, in this new century, whether Lowell is still readable, still a channel for intense emotion, still an interesting mind within which to dwell, the answer—given these eight hundred pages of frequently thrilling writing—is self-evident.

Yet these poems are not easy reading for the average American, who knows no poetry, no history, no theology, and no Latin roots. (Lowell, a summa cum laude graduate in classics, knew the etymology of all his words.) At least we now have, in this volume, two hundred pages of notes, a great help in decoding the more allusive poems. Frank Bidart's intimate introduction leads the reader to understanding, in Lowell, the relation of private to public, of original to revision; and in his brilliant "Afterword: On 'Confessional' Poetry," he draws all the right distinctions between art and life. The relation could not be more precisely formulated: the "invented world" of the poem is "dense with the luminous opacity of life": "Autobiography promises that the walls of a house will dissolve, the veil that separates us from what is real will be at last lifted. In a Lowell poem what the reader is offered with at times startling candor is an invented world dense with the luminous opacity of life."

As we think of Lowell's poetry as a whole, we are struck by how strongly earnestness and irony labor to co-exist. This is a rare conjunction. Didactic poets tend not to ironize their own utterance, and ironists often ward off earnestness. The moral discovery in reading Lowell is that the one need not be sacrificed for the other, that a pervading earnestness about how people have lived (or might live or should live) can be suffused by an ironic sense of life's grim comedy of mixed motives, vanity, self-delusion, and malice. In Lowell's detached scrutiny, the historical panorama both appalls and amuses, but somewhere in the corner is Vermeer's girl "solid with yearning."

Lowell made strenuous efforts to try out different poetics (with concomitant differences in style); he resisted "the art of the possible/that art abhors." If, in his restless experimentation—with formal and free, personal and impersonal, learned and simple, the painting and the snapshot, the grim and the grand, the packed and the loose—he slipped or stumbled, did too much or too little, overshot or drew back, he still left us innumerable inspired lines and many inspired poems, enough of them to win new readers in every generation. The centuries always recognize brilliant writing. I close with a brief sample of such writing from *History*: Lowell's unforgettable still life of the remains of a lobster dinner. It has not been done before; it cannot be done again; Lowell has done it. It prophesies and ironizes, in his best nihilist style, his own proximate death, but it does not lack his characteristic late humor:

> I hear the moon
> simmer the mildew on a pile of shells,
> the fruits of my banquet . . . a boiled
> lobster,
> red shell and hollow foreclaw,
> cracked, sucked dry,
> flung on the ash-heap of a soggy
> carton—
> it eyes me, two pinhead, burnt-out
> popping eyes.

"C'est toujours la vie qui me regarde," says Stevens. It is Lowell's boldness in returning life's gaze, even when it emanates from a crustacean corpse, that distinguishes the stunning poems that are collected here. ■

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MONTREAL DIARIST

Moose That Roared

WHEN I USED TO VISIT Montreal in the early '90s, I feared walking in certain areas. At the time, unemployment topped 10 percent, and entrepreneurial Montrealers were fleeing to the United States in droves. In fact, nearly all of Canada was depressed, struggling through a recession and political tension over the potential separation of Quebec: In 1995, independence proponents fell less than 1 percentage point short of victory in a separatism referendum. In populous areas, jobless Montrealers would harass pedestrians with archaic French curses until harassees parted with change. On one occasion, when I refused to give up my cash, several beggars pursued me in a slow-motion chase—trying to seem unafraid, I didn't want to run—until I reached an intersection I didn't recognize. I sprinted off.

MONTREAL HAS SOBERED UP. WALKING its streets last month, I saw few beggars but many yuppie couples; the city's unemployment rate has plummeted since the mid-'90s as its economy has boomed. Cranes dotted the skyline. At bars along St. Laurent, a major thoroughfare, twentysomethings sucked down pricey martinis in a scene from Silicon Valley circa 1999. Even the infamous sex shops along St. Catherine Street have gone upscale. Whereas in the mid-'90s they were run by seedy-looking men, now shops are well-organized and staffed by businesslike, cheery Asian Canadians. And the rest of Canada is keeping pace with Montreal, delivering the West's most dynamic economic growth and some of its more dramatic political makeovers. Faced with spiraling budget deficits and low productivity, Canada's leaders restructured the country's economy in the late '90s, mixing limited tax cuts with balanced budgets. Meanwhile, Canada's relatively weak currency has made its exports competitive; its continuing dedication to national social insurance programs, which save employers from health care expenses, have encouraged business growth; and its incentives for high-value industries, such as biotechnology, have fostered innovation. That Quebec appears to have given up separatist ambitions helps, too: Quebeckers recently voted out of office the pro-independence *Parti Québécois*.

THE RESULTS OF THESE ECONOMIC AND political changes have been impressive. Canada posted the highest growth rates of any industrialized country last year, it added over 500,000 new jobs in 2002, and it has become the only deficit-free Western nation. While Boeing's planes pile up unused, Bombardier, Montreal's innovative small-jet manufacturer, has been swamped with orders. While U.S. movie capitals have struggled, Canada, which is cheaper and offers filmmakers incentives, has emerged as the locale of choice. Nearly 60 films that supposedly took place in Chicago have been shot in Canada since 1985. In fact, though many Americans view their northern neighbor as an unchanging, frozen morass, Canada has emerged as a serious rival to America's role as the hemisphere's economic dynamo and champion of liberal political ideals. In posting strong growth while the United States struggles, Canada is demonstrating an alternative economic model: a major economy where, unlike in Europe, leaders reduce the power of the state and, unlike in the United States, maintain enough of a safety net to give the poor a fighting chance. Canada has always boasted a larger welfare state than the United States, but, in the past, state intervention hindered growth so much that Canada could hardly claim to be a true rival. Now, perhaps it can. According to *The New York Times*, Canada's five major banks have spent more than $8 billion acquiring U.S. companies since 1996.

WHILE ITS ECONOMY HAS GROWN, Canada also has begun to challenge the United States as the nation most dedicated to individual rights, a change from the past, when Canada was more economically liberal than the United States but more socially conservative. According to Michael Adams, author of *Fire and Ice: The United States, Canada, and the Myth of Converging Values*, Canadians actually are becoming more protective of individual freedoms than Americans. Canada's relatively recent adoption of a bill of rights seems to have made Canadians more protective of its guarantees, and the population growth of libertarian western Canada has furthered this trend. In the past five years, Canadian provinces have legalized same-sex marriage and decriminalized possession of cannabis. And, in contrast to the United States, Canada has adopted more open policies on immigration—policies that may also bolster its economic growth as foreign talent flocks north. Toronto's population is more than 40 percent foreign-born. In Montreal, restaurants serving traditional Quebec fare—heavy meat dishes that would warm a school lunch lady's heart—have been replaced by Thai noodle houses and Lebanese bistros. Overall, 18 percent of Canadians today are foreign-born, nearly twice the percentage of Americans. Many foreign-born Canadians came north from the United States, fearing America's tightening immigration policies: Since September 11, 2001, thousands of educated Chinese and Indian workers on high-tech-sector U.S. visas have gone to Canada. These workers are an enormous loss. Already, Canada's economy has begun to benefit, as émigrés from the United States staff biotech firms in Canadian cities.

AND CANADA HAS BECOME MORE confident. As one Canadian friend put it, whereas once his countrymen defined themselves by their opposition to the United States, today they pay less attention to the neighboring giant. The Canadian government opposed the war in Iraq, and most Canadians opposed it as well; yet, in recent polls, more than 70 percent of Canadians gave a favorable rating to the United States, showing that the run-up to the war had little impact up north. Indeed, virtually no one I talked to in Montreal was interested in Iraq, and local newspapers largely focused on whether the Montreal Canadiens' goalie was a member of the Hell's Angels gang.

THE CANADIAN RENAISSANCE COULD still sour. Continued economic sluggishness in the United States may bring Canada down. The strengthening Canadian dollar could undercut exports. Generous refugee laws could help terrorist groups set up shop in Canada. But, even if the good times end, Canada has probably changed too much to go back. I don't think I'll have to sprint again in Montreal any time soon. **JOSHUA KURLANTZICK**

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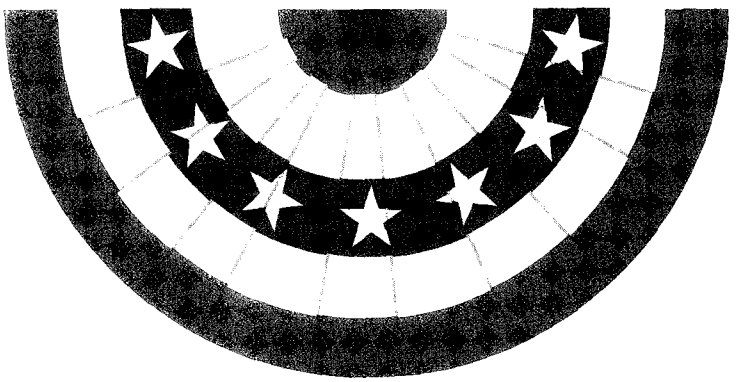

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Lost Opportunities

Eric A. Hanushek is the Paul and Jean Hanna Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

One way to look at the costs of failed education reforms is to calculate the added money we put into our schools with no improvement in student performance. These costs, although significant, pale in comparison to the opportunity costs to our economy. In failing to reform our schools, we are failing to provide the foundation for our own future economic growth.

The impetus for many education reforms today was *A Nation at Risk*—a federal report issued in 1983 that concluded the United States was hurting itself by maintaining mediocre schools. Unfortunately, the push to improve schools resulting from the report has led to ineffective reforms. Per-pupil spending, for instance, has increased by 50 percent over the past twenty years; pupil-teacher ratios have fallen by a sixth, to sixteen to one; and yet student performance, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, is essentially the same today as it was in 1970.

Although the resources we are providing to schools are increasing, the quality of the education those schools are providing is not. This is a crucial distinction because extensive research demonstrates that education quality, as measured by test scores, is related to the earnings of individuals, national productivity, and economic growth.

Individuals with greater skills tend to earn more than those with lower scores. But each individual's education also has the potential of making others better off: a more educated society has a higher rate of invention, leading to increased productivity, which leads to more invention, which equates to more productivity, and so on. The resulting economic growth determines the improvement that will occur in society's overall standard of living.

Labor force quality can be directly related to the economic growth of a country. Relying on objective measures of the mathematics and science performance of students in many countries during the past four decades, a colleague and I considered differences in national growth (after accounting for differences between countries' levels of income, the average number of years students are in school, and population growth rates).

We discovered that **school quality has profound effects on economic growth**—feasible levels of improvement in math and science skills can lead to as much as a 1 percent increase in the annual growth rate of per capita gross domestic product (GDP). Although 1 percent may not sound significant, consider this: in the year 2000, per capita GDP in the United States was $34,950; an annual growth rate of 1 percent would raise that to $57,480 by 2050—more than a 60 percent increase.

What if the United States had embarked on true school reform at the time of *A Nation at Risk?* Had we lifted math and science performance to the level of the best European countries during the decade of the 1980s, U.S. growth would begin to pick up as those students became a significant portion of the labor force. Today, on the twentieth anniversary of the report, the "reform dividend" from this growth could have exceeded our total annual spending on K–12 education.

The opportunity costs for failing to reform our schools have been high and will only continue to rise if we do not act now to make education reform a reality. The economic future of this nation simply cannot readily afford another twenty years of lost opportunities.

— Eric A. Hanushek

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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